794 the Nayar goddess of war, smallpox and the
564 soil. Fourth came the smaller Bhagavadi temples
of village Nayars, one of which was found
in each village or group of villages of the same
subcaste where Nayar retainers were present.
[782] In the first two types of temples, animal sacrifice
was forbidden; offerings were of flowers,
fruits, incense and fire. The priests were
[793] either Nambudiri Brahmans or members of a
lower landless caste called Embrandiri Brahmans
who are immigrant from South Canara to
the north. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards
of such temples but might not perform
rites there. In a village which contained a
temple of type (1), there was often no Nayar population
at all: a group of lineages of one or
more temple servant subcastes replaced them
as retainers of the Nambudiris and as kanam
tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a
temple of type (2), there would be one or two
individual lineages of one or other temple servant
caste, attached to the Nambudiri temple,
but also a group of Nayar retainers with their
own Bhagavadi temple. [22] In villages not
headed by Nambudiri Brahmans, there might be
only a Bhagavadi temple, managed collectively
by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar caste
might also be present to drum in the temple,
but the other temple servant castes did not work
in village Bhagavadi temples. Similarly in a
royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi
temple owned by the ruling lineage, the
temple servant castes might be absent except
for one lineage of Marars, but individuals of the

514 994 other temple servant castes might come from other villages to assist at special annual ceremonies. In royal and chiefly Bhagavadi temples [787] the priest was usually a Nambudiri Brahman, though a Nayar shaman was attached to the temple and periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people. [793] In village Nayar Bhagavadi temples, the priest was either an Embrandiri Brahman hired by the Nayars, or a Nayar; there was in addition a Nayar shaman. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi [782] temple were similar to those in a Nambudiri temple, but annual ceremonies involved animal sacrifice by Nayars, in which Brahmans and [252] temple servants took no part. Consistent with these differences in ritual behaviour, Nambudiris and all temple servants were vegetarians; royal, chiefly and Nayar castes ate meat. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise almost identical in general culture to Nayars, and historically were probably once Nayars. Among temple servants, Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine or intermarry. They ranked roughly [23] parallel to the chiefs of districts (with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine) and above the retainer-Nayars, who might receive food from them but not give food to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servant castes and parallel to Nayars, with whom they had few social relations outside the temple, and did not interdine or intermarry.

Below all these aristocratic castes in ritual

421 servants and serfs, of rents to the janmi, and
592 the receipt of rents from tenants. Today in law
672 as it was codified by the British the legal personality of the property-group is clearly recognized: suits concerning property-disputes, for example, are filed in the name of a property-group and not of its karanavan as an individual.

592 (b) Ritual Observances of the Group

Besides having important legal functions, the property-group was united in rites of various kinds. Its members acted jointly as a host-
[561] group in inviting neighbouring groups of the village to rites de passage such as name-giving (28th day), first rice-feeding (6th month) and the ceremonies associated with a death. At the tali-
[796] rite, the lineage as a whole held the ceremony in its oldest house, but expenses were divided between the property-groups and food for the feasts
[764] cooked separately in their houses. Similarly at a death, the whole lineage observed pollution and attended the cremation, gathering of bones and ashes on the 7th day, and purification and feasting on the 15th day, but members of the property-group, male and female, each made offerings of cooked rice to the spirit in their
[765] courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the man considered most closely related to the deceased - her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man next younger to him in the property-group, in the case of a man.

592 The propitiation of snakes and of dead male
782 forbears also united the group's members. The

592 nagas or cobra-deities which were believed to
782 guard each group were housed in the snake-grove
in a corner of the garden and annually given
offerings of milk and eggs by the karanavan in
the presence of members. As well as warding
592 off ordinary sickness and misfortune they were
782 particularly [58] believed responsible for the
fertility or barrenness of taravad women. Spe-
cial offerings were made to them if a woman
failed to conceive, and a performance was held a
at which men and women of a low caste called
Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to
[787] entice the snakes in the grove to appear. A
group of women of the taravad, after purifying
themselves by fasting and sex-continence for
several days previously, then became possessed
by the snake-gods (who are said to have "entered
into them") and performed a wild dance, bowing
and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair
along the ground. In this condition they might
speak with the voice of the snakes and announce
what propitiations were necessary to appease
[158] them. Sometimes the ceremony ended with one
or more women falling into a fit. It seems
592 fairly certain that the snake-gods were (as so
786 commonly elsewhere) worshipped as phallic
symbols. Since they were definitely not re-
garded as the spirits of dead matrilineal for-
bears, but were capable of alternately with-
holding fertility from taravad women or causing
them to conceive, it is a plausible guess that
they collectively symbolized the procreative
powers of past genitors of the property-group,
who had been so essential to its perpetuation yet

564 794 ranked below Nambudiris but above retainer Nāyars and certain matrilineal temple-servant castes. The latter included Nambyars, Puduvals, and Marars, three castes of drummers, and Psharodis and Variyars, castes of temple stewards.

564 794 The temple-servant castes were small and lived chiefly in villages owned by Nambudiri Brahmans or in sankētams. Four types of temples were distinguishable among the higher castes. First were the large temples of the sankētams, whose estates were managed by Nambudiris. They were dedicated to all-India, Puranic deities, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second, were the private temples of individual Nambudiri families in villages owned by Nambudiris, which were small replicas of the first type. Third were the private temples of royal and chiefly matrilineages, dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali—the Nayar goddess of war, epidemic, land, and fertility. Fourth were the smaller Bhagavadi temples of village Nayars, each collectively managed by an assembly of Nayar retainers of one or more villages.

[782] [793] [613] In the first two types of temple animal sacrifice was forbidden. Offerings were of fruit, flowers, incense, and fire. The priests were low-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards of such temples but might not perform rites there. In a village which formed part of a sankētam there was sometimes no Nayar population at all; a group of lineages of one or more temple-servant castes replaced them as retainers of the Brahmans and as permanent tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a temple of the second type, one or two lineages of some temple-servant caste would be attached to the temple, but there would invariably also be a group of Sudra Nayar retainers with their own Bhagavadi temple.

564 794 613 In villages under a Nayar headman there might be only one Bhagavadi temple managed collectively by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar caste might be present to drum in the temple, but the other temple-servant castes did not work in Nayar village temples. Similarly, in a royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi temple of the ruling lineage, the temple-servant castes might be absent except for one lineage of Marars. Persons of other temple-servant castes might however come from nearby villages to assist at special ceremonies.

794 564 [793] [791] [782] In Bhagavadi temples the regular priest was usually of a special low subdivision of Nambudiris (Adigals). In addition a Nayar shaman, attached to the temple, periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi temple were similar to those in a Brahman temple, but annual festi-

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vals involved animal sacrifice by Nayars in which Brahmans and tem- 564
ple servants took no part. [782]

Consistent with these differences in ritual practice, Nambudiris and temple servants were vegetarians and followed rules of non-violence. Royals, chiefs, and Nayar retainers were warriors and until modern [262] times usually ate meat and drank liquor. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise culturally similar to Nayars, with [613] whom they probably had a common origin.

Below the Chakkyars and the Pushpagans, the Nambyars, Psharodis, 564 Variyars, and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine. These castes ranked roughly parallel to the district chiefs, with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine. They ranked above the retainer Nayars, who might receive food from them but might not give to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servants and parallel to retainer Nayars, with whom, however, they had few social relations outside the temple and did not interdine.

The Nayar Menials in Temples Below all these aristocratic castes 564 came certain small matrilineal castes of menial, non-military Nayars 794 whose work was largely connected with temples. Vattekad Nayars [613] were oilmongers; Odatt Nayars, tile makers; Andura Nayars, temple potters. One Vattekad lineage was present in every village to supply oil for temple lamps. Often the headman of the Vattekad lineage was the shaman of the Nayar Bhagavadi temple. Vattekad Nayars also performed household tasks for Kiriattil Nayar village headmen, which ordinary Kiriattil Nayars were too proud to do. Odatt and Andura Nayars were very small castes,[8] and one lineage might serve six or eight villages.

The Nayar Servant Castes Below the temple menials came three 564 matrilineal castes of servant Nayars with "degrading" occupations. 613 Chidigans (called Attikurssis in the Calicut kingdom) were funeral priests of the higher matrilineal castes. Veluttedans were washermen of all the castes above them and Vilakkataravans were barbers of all the castes above them. One lineage of each was usually present in a village. Funeral priests ranked above barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank and would not interdine.

Social Relations among the Higher Castes The castes so far men- 564

[8] The kings permitted only Brahmans, royalty, and the greater chiefs to roof their houses and temples with tiles. Tile making was therefore a minor craft, and temple [643] pottery was of superior quality to that used by commoners. The ordinary polluting [333] caste of potters, Kumbarans, camped outside villages and exchanged their wares [323] for grain.

Shortly before or after puberty she might, following the ceremony, 588
enter without religious rites into sexual liaisons with one or more 836
men of her own or an appropriate higher caste. Similarly, a Nayar 564
man (whether or not he had ever performed the tāli rite) might enter 613
into relationships with any number of women of his own or an appropriate
lower Nayar caste.

These marriage customs are further discussed below. Here it is 613
relevant to point only to the role of the *enangan* bridegroom. Since 564
the enangar stood to the lineage as formal representatives of the local 588
caste group, it seems appropriate to interpret the tāli rite as a ceremony 182
of group marriage, in which the caste group as a whole married
the immature girls of the lineage as a whole.

The tāli rite was indeed both a religious and a legal transaction
between the lineage and the enangu or neighborhood group. If a [688]
girl was discovered to have attained puberty before it had been performed,
the assembly forced her property group to expel her and to
perform her funeral rites, for she was thought to be ritually dangerous
to her caste as a whole. For a woman, the tāli which she wore round [885]
her neck until death was therefore a sign that she had been ceremonially
and legally accepted as a mature woman of her lineage and
caste, "cleared" to bear children to perpetuate both groups.

The lineage similarly operated as a unit, and the enangar fulfilled 613
similar roles as formal links with the caste on the occasion of a 564
funeral. All adult males of the lineage who were junior to the deceased 764
attended his cremation, which took place in the southwest
corner of the garden of his house. Representative members of all [783]
enangar households also came to help with practical tasks and to
provide ritual objects for the chief mourner's ceremonies, although
they were forbidden to touch or to receive food from the mourners
throughout their period of pollution. In the fifteen days after the 765
death only the deceased's household, assisted by their special enangar 613
households, took part in the collection of the bones and ashes and 783
made offerings to the departed spirit. Other lineage members observed 782
death pollution in their homes and were attended by enangar
there. On the fifteenth day the lineage reassembled at the house of the
dead. After many ceremonies its members were purified by the funeral
priest from the pollution of death. On the sixteenth day final offerings
were made to the spirit. The deceased's household then held a large 613
feast, which was shared by lineage members and representatives from 765
all houses of the linked lineages. This reception of food by the enangar 564
from the hands of the deceased's matrilineal kinsmen marked a 783

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564 formal recognition that the bereaved lineage, freed from its death
765 pollution, had been received back into the normal social life of the
783 caste.

613 Lineage members were also united in worship of their lineage
goddess or *dharma devi* ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess,
776 named differently in different lineages, was a species of the common
794 Nayar goddess Bhagavadi. Her idol was housed in a small shrine near
the oldest ancestral house or sometimes in the courtyard of the village
temple. She was believed capable of inflicting or withholding sickness
● [782] and all types of misfortune. To ward them off, members
propitiated her with offerings of cooked food every year. The astrologer
might also advise an emergency propitiation. She had the power
[588] to bless women of the lineage with fertility. On this account she was
[842] worshipped before a tāli rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies
of a girl. In a somewhat vague sense, moreover, lineage members
appear to have felt themselves collectively responsible to the
[753] goddess for sins or ritual lapses on the part of one of them. It was believed
that if any member failed to observe the religious laws of
[826] caste, to perform household duties correctly, or to revere the goddess,
[784] she might bring sickness or misfortune upon the lineage as a whole.

613 In spite of this sense of collective moral responsibility, the evidence
is unclear as to whether the lineage as a whole was held legally
681 responsible for any of its member's acts. It is true that the enangar
564 were the legal representatives of the local caste unit in its relations
with the lineage. This inter-lineage relationship was hereditary and
obligatory. It could not be entered into or permanently broken without
the consent of the assembly and the chief of the district. If,
moreover, an individual infringed a religious law of the caste, it was
[692] the duty of his lineage's enangar to summon a caste assembly to judge
[823] and punish the offense. Crimes, which were also sins, against caste
law included incest within the lineage; dining or sex relations with
prohibited lower-caste persons; failure to perform the marriage rite
of a girl before she reached puberty; failure to observe pollution at
the birth or death of a lineage member or (on the part of an individual
woman) during menstruation; failure to pay dues in kind
to the Nayar temple of the neighborhood. On being apprized of an
offense, the assembly's first recourse was temporarily to ostracize the
offender's household from the caste community. Ostracism meant
that the offenders might not enter the temple, bathe in public bathing
pools, enter the houses of other Nayars, employ the village servant

342 tertaining friends, or sleeping when they were not visiting their wives.
[343] A cowshed a few yards from the residential buildings completed the
arrangements in a normal retainer homestead. In village headmen's
342 and chiefly households whose women often had Brahman husbands
556 a separate building with its own kitchen was set aside to entertain
the men when they visited their wives.

[357] The buildings and outer courtyard were surrounded by a shady
garden of coconut, jack, cashew, and mango trees. Chiefs and village
[312] headmen had a private bathing pool with stone steps round it in their
own gardens. Retainers more often bathed in the large public bathing
[515] pools attached to the temples and reserved for "clean" castes of the
village. Men and women bathed and swam daily on opposite sides of
the pool.

351 In the southwest corner of the garden an open space was set aside
613 as the property group's cremation ground, entered only at funerals.
[764] In another corner was a dense shrubbery devoted to the snake gods
[776] of the group. Offerings were made there to small stone images of
[782] cobras, and if real cobras appeared they were regarded as manifestations
[825] of these deities.

A high bamboo fence surrounded the whole establishment. It was
entered through a wooden gatehouse within which armed men might
592 sit on guard in time of war.

241 *Economic Activities* The property group obtained almost all of its
subsistence from garden and paddy lands held on tenure from the
427 village landlord and cultivated by Tiyyar sub-tenants or by Pulaya
613 serfs. The property group surrendered part of its produce in kind as
433 dues to the landlord. It retained part for maintenance, stored part for
repayment to its serfs as daily subsistence, and gave portions twice
annually to the village servant households. Tiyyar tenants retained
enough for their own needs, but gave the bulk of their produce to
their Nayar masters. Increasingly during the period of European trade
[439] the property group also sold spices and coconuts to Muslim middlemen
[432] in exchange for cash or cloth. The cash was used to buy brass
and silver vessels, gold ornaments and jewelry, and other luxury goods
[431] from the towns. The property group gave some cloth to its serfs
and tenants at festivals once a year.

613 The kāranavan managed all these transactions and controlled the
592 group's estate. He might allocate specific tasks of management to
juniors, but no payment was made on behalf of the group, no crops
[465] were sold, and no goods were consumed without his consent. Junior
men serving in the king's wars received small daily cash sums on an

613 of the group, maintaining its accounts in her own hands and counsel-
592 ing the kâranavan on his transactions with outsiders. When the oldest
woman was the kâranavan's own or classificatory younger sister or
sister's daughter her role was unequivocally subordinate and a formal
division of duties was common.

613 *Rites of the Property Group* The property group jointly invited en-
592 angar households to the ceremonies of name giving, first rice feed-
796 ing, first menstruation, and death. The lineage as a whole held the
tâli rite in its oldest house. However, expenses were divided between
the property groups and food was cooked separately in their homes.
613 Similarly, at a death the whole lineage observed pollution and at-
592 tended the cremation, the gathering of bones on the seventh day, and
764 the purification and feasting on the fifteenth and sixteenth days. But
men and women of the deceased's own property group offered cooked
rice to the spirit in their courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the junior man considered most closely related to the deceased—her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man immediately junior to him in the property group in the case of a man.

613 The propitiation of cobra gods and of dead matrilineal forebears
592 also united the group's members. The cobra deities (*nāgas*) could
776 inflict or avert sickness in general but were especially believed re-
842 sponsible for the fertility or barrenness [7] of taravād women. If a
782 woman failed to conceive, a performance was held at which men and
women of a wandering caste called Pulluvar played instruments and
787 sang songs to entice the cobras to appear. A group of women of the
[753] taravād, who had purified themselves by sex continence and fasting
for several days, then became possessed by the snake gods. They performed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with the voices of the gods and announce whatever propitiations were necessary to appease them. Sometimes one or more of the women fell into a trance.

776 It seems reasonable to suppose that the snake gods were worshipped
842 as phallic symbols. They were definitely not regarded as the spirits of
dead matrilineal forebears, yet were capable of withholding fertility or of causing women to conceive. Perhaps, therefore, they symbolized the procreative powers of past genitors of the property group, who

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[7] Snake gods inflicted barrenness; the lineage goddess inflicted miscarriages and sickness in childbirth.

had been so essential to its perpetuation, yet so firmly excluded from 776 842
its everyday affairs.

Within each Nayar house one room was devoted to the spirits of 769
dead kāranavans. It contained a number of small wooden stools on 778
which spirits were believed to come and sit. The ancestor shrine of 613
the lineage's oldest house contained many stools placed there in turn
for the kāranavans of past generations, reaching back to the foundation
of the lineage. A newer house would contain only the stools of
kāranavans of that house. Offerings of cooked food were made before [782]
each stool by the living kāranavan, in the presence of all members,
twice a year. The kāranavans' spirits were vindictive rather than
protective. They were prone to punish the taravād with sickness or financial [626]
loss if any of its members failed in details of ritual performance,
in care of the property, or in piety toward matrilineal kin. I 769
have suggested elsewhere (Gough, 1958) that the cult of dead matrilineal 613
forebears served as a focus for aggressive impulses which had 182
their origin in relationships with living matrilineal elders. At the same [154]
time it united the living in fear and reverence of the dead and reaffirmed
the moral laws of the taravād. It also acted as a sanction [626]
against a kāranavan's own exploitation of his juniors, since the maintenance
of right relations with junior kinsmen formed part of his pious
duty to his forebears.

The Splitting of Property Groups Genealogies and property docu- 613
ments reveal that during the nineteenth century the property groups 592
of retainer Nayars divided at a particular point in their development. [175]
This occurred when the property group comprised two or more discrete
segments descended from sisters, each segment containing an
adult male capable of becoming kāranavan of his branch. For a segment
to be "discrete," its founding ancestress, whether herself living
or dead, must not have a mother, brothers, or mother's brothers
alive. Separation before this point was not possibly because the division
of property was stirpital. Individual men, the managers of property,
could not separate themselves from their own mothers or sisters.
A man could therefore never be a member of a different property
group from that of his own mother's mother's brother, mother's brother,
or brother. Division could take place only between groups headed by
men from different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and
his classificatory mother's brother, etc.), who were no longer held together
by submission to a common mother's brother, grandmother, or
great-uncle.

121 like the cult of lineage ghosts, are non-Sanskritic. I discuss the three categories of
613 cults in that order, and then refer briefly to modern changes in the cults.

The Cult of Lineage Ghosts

769 Each traditional Nāyar house contains a room devoted to lineage ghosts. Within
353 the shrine are placed small, low stools (*pīṭhams*). On each of these it is believed that
778 a particular ghost comes to sit on the days when offerings are made.

769 In property groups of the aristocratic lineages of village headmen and district
613 chiefs, which own more land than do commoner Nāyars, family histories recorded
554 in palm leaf documents may contain the names and achievements of twenty or more
[217] *kāranavans* extending back over two or three hundred years. In such lineages, whose
[778] property groups divide less frequently than do those of commoner Nāyars, the *kāranavans'* spirits are housed in a special building in the courtyard south of the ancestral house. Commoner Nāyars care somewhat less for their ancestry. Sometimes they have only three or four stools for their lineage ghosts and remember by name only those who died within the last hundred years or whose lives were in some way remarkable. Remarkable *kāranavans* are those who fought bravely in battles or received honor from chief or king, those who earned property on behalf of their matrilineal groups, or those who died prematurely through accident, murder, epidemic or suicide.

769 Regular offerings are made only to *kāranavans*, for only *kāranavans* hold legal
613 authority and only their names tend to appear in documents which survive for posterity.
782 On the advice of the astrologer, however, a *taravād* may, in emergency, propitiate the ghost of an ancestress or of a man who died before becoming *kāranavan*. But such ghosts are always those who died within the lifetime of living members.

769 The lineage ghosts are regularly propitiated[5] on the new moon days of Karkidagam
796 (July-August) and Tulām (October-November). Food is cooked in the kitchen by
613 women of the matrilineal household, and a large portion is placed on a plantain leaf
261 for each of the ghosts. It includes curried meat and vegetables, fried paddy, beaten
782 rice, fuits, and sweet puddings of various kinds. Toddy and arrack were traditionally served along with the meal. If a dead *kāranavan* is known to have enjoyed special foods during life, he receives a large portion of these foods. Occasionally, even in the past, individual Nāyars have been vegetarians. The spirits of vegetarian *kāranavans* may not be served with meat and are housed in a separate shrine. When the dishes are prepared, they are carried quickly to the shrine so that the ghosts may partake of their essence before others have tasted or smelled them. The living *kāranavan* places the leaves before the stools in the presence of men junior to him in the property group and then closes the door of the shrine. Age-rank is observed in making the offerings. For each spirit, in addition to its own leaf, is briefly offered the food later placed before the stools of spirits junior to it. Similarly, the vegetables of vegetarian ghosts are first offered to meat eaters who were senior to them, and the vegetables (but not the meat) cooked for meat eating ghosts are first offered to vegetarian ghosts who were their seniors. After a few minutes the *kāranavan* reopens the door and distributes
[183] the food, to be eaten by all members of the *taravād*. Women take no part in
[562] offering the food and may not enter the ancestral shrine on this day. They are also forbidden to enter it during menstrual and birth pollutions, and all members are forbidden entry during the fifteen days of pollution following a death.

000 Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the *taravād* might

Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the taravād might become drunk with toddy and arrack. In this condition, one or more young men 796 might undergo possession by one of the ghosts. He performed a frenzied dance and 769 called out to the assembled members with the voice of the ghost, declaring its will 613 and thanking or threatening the *taravād* on its behalf. I heard of only one *taravād* 873 where this custom persisted. Shamanistic possession by the goddess Bhagavatī or by 782 the god Aiyappan is, however, still prevalent among rural Nāyars, and such religious [776] possession is still more common among the lower castes. [784]

In some *taravāds*, propitiation of lineage ghosts accompanies that of various deities 769 associated with the *taravād*. Chief of these is the lineage's patron goddess (*dharma* 776 *devī*). The goddess, though known by different names in different *taravāds*, is always 782 thought of as a species of the generic goddess Bhagavadi or Bhādrakāli, the chief 613 deity of the Nāyars. Each group of Nāyar *taravāds* in a village usually possesses in common a temple dedicated to Bhādrakāli, but each *taravād* has, in addition, its [346] own goddess. Cults of the village goddess are more important in Cochin, and of the [184] *taravād* goddess, in Kottayam. The village goddess is believed capable of withholding [753] or inflicting on the population wholesale misfortunes of a kind which strike all men alike—smallpox, cholera, flood, drought, cyclone, cattle epidemic, or defeat in an intervillage feud. Such inflictions result from failure to propitiate the goddess or failure to uphold the moral laws of caste. The *taravād* goddess concerns herself with its members' private morality and inflicts such individual misfortunes as fever, barrenness in women or cattle, or grave financial loss.

In aristocratic *taravāds*, the goddess and the lineage ghosts may nowadays be [346] housed together in an ancient gynasium (*ḳalari*) near the ancestral house—a building formerly devoted to the military training of the *taravād's* youth. The ghosts may then be propitiated with cooked food on the same day on which a cock is sacrificed to the patron goddess. In such rites, propitiation of both spirits and goddess are associated with the *taravād's* former martial glory. In the rites there usually figure one or more ancestral swords which the male forebears used during their lives. These swords are the property of the goddess and are propitiated by the *ḳāranvan* as representatives of the deity.

Lineage ghosts have some concern with the *taravād's* internal morality. If its 769 members fail in hospitality to guests, squander their income, or neglect their property, 626 the ghosts may inflict misfortunes on one or more members of the group. However, 782 failure to propitiate the ghosts correctly is the offence most likely to provoke retribution. 613 Conversely, if offerings are made correctly to the ghosts, they will help to preserve the *taravād* from misfortune.

The ghosts vary in their severity and in the wrongs which they punish. A *ḳāranavan* who amassed much property is most likely to resent extravagance on the part of his successors. Forebears who died prematurely are more punitive than those who died peacefully in old age. All ghosts, however, are somewhat capricious: a small offense may provoke stern retribution, and misdemeanors on the part of one adult may result in the sickness of another or of a child of the property group. In particular, a forebear who was injured or insulted by his juniors during life or after his death may wreak vengeance on the *taravād* even down to the seventh or eighth generation. One instance from a village headman's lineage in Kottayam will illustrate such retribution. In 1798, the property group was dying out for lack of women, and the *ḳāranavan* [597] adopted a woman and her children from a related segment of his lineage. After the [429]

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613 *kāranavan*'s death, his adopted successor was too young to manage the property. This
782 passed temporarily into the management of a man from still another branch of the
597 same lineage. When the true claimant came of age he disputed his guardian's manage-
429 ment. After a bitter lawsuit the guardian was deposed in a British court. He continued
[578] to live on the *taravād*'s land and to harass his young successor. When the guardian
died, the young *kāranavan* in his anger failed to arrange for the cremation rites until
[753] several days had passed and the corpse had decomposed. The ghost of this proxy
kāranavan has harrassed his successors ever since, causing many of them to die of
diabetes. The present members regard this condition as a decomposition of the body
during life. The ghost's anger is so great that propitiations do not wholly avert its
vengeance, although special offerings temporarily delay the progress of the disease.

769 The misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts include many forms of sickness, mental
disorder, female barrenness and miscarriages, all of which are attributed to actual
613 bodily possession by a ghost. Financial loss, crop failure and the deaths of babies or
776 cows may also result from the ghosts' displeasure. I could find no very clear distinction
753 between the misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts and those brought about by the
761 patron goddess, by malevolent alien ghosts, or by the witchcraft or sorcery of enemies.
789 Indeed it is obvious that the Nāyars themselves do not clearly restrict particular
misfortunes to particular agents. For on the occasion of a misfortune, the *kāranavan*
must often consult the village astrologer (Kanisan) who makes calculations to discover
the responsible agent. He then instructs the *kāranavan* how to carry out its propitiation
776 or to accomplish its control.

769 However, my information suggests that some misfortunes may be more likely to
be attributed to some agents than to others. Miscarriages, for example, seem to be
[843] often attributed to ancestresses, to female alien ghosts, or to the patron goddess.
[842] Barrenness is often attributed to the snake gods of the *taravād*, who are believed to
guard the fertility of its women. These misfortunes seem to be less often attributed
to male ghosts, although some instances are known. Perhaps most important, however,
circumstances immediately preceding the misfortune may help to determine the
agent. If a forebear has died recently, or if a *taravād* has failed to propitiate its lineage
ghosts or patron goddess, the *kāranavan* may not even trouble to consult the astrologer,
or the astroleger may merely corroborate his suspicions. Similarly, if a man has an
[754] enemy with whom he has recently quarreled and then himself falls ill with fever, he
is like to assume that the enemy has engaged the services of a witch or sorcerer against
him. In small villages whose population is stable, moreover, the astrologer makes it
his business to know the affairs of his clients and thus to diagnose appropriate causes
for their misfortunes.

692 *Sociological analysis.* A satisfactory analysis of the functions of lineage ghosts
must take into account those of other supernatural agents and of secular authorities.
[776] Among the Nāyars, supernatural agents have played only a minor role in punishing
[784] offences against men, as distinct from those against themselves. This is undoubtedly
because human authorities of various kinds had strong judicial functions, deriving
from their incorporation in a kingdom. In the last analysis their authority was backed
by the military power of the king or chief. Among Nāyars, civil disputes were tried
by village headman or district chief. Certain major crimes against the kingdom's
[688] religious laws were tried in the Raja's court. They included the killing of a cow or a
Brahman or fornication with lower caste persons. The killing or assault of a Nāyar

The Killing or assault of a Nayar

outside the lineage led to feuds between lineages or between larger territorial units. 692
In Cochin, the king had more power than in Kottayam to curtail such feuds or confine [628]
them to organized duels for which a fee must be paid. Minor offences against caste
law, such as dining with low caste persons, were tried by the subcaste assembly of the [688]
village and resulted in temporary excommunication of the offender's property group [564]
and the payment of a fine to the village goddess's temple.

The *kāranavan* had the legal right to punish offences within the property group 613
and also those offences against caste law for which the caste held the property group 692
responsible until justice had been done. Incest and murder within the lineage appear [684]
to have been punished by expulsion from the *taravād* by the *kāranavan* and from the [682]
caste by the caste assembly. In cases of grave insubordination by a junior member, the
kāranavan had the right to deny him maintenance or access to the ancestral house [564]
until he mended his behavior.

Thus the supernatural agents of the village and the *taravād* primarily acted to 692
force the human authorities to carry out their judicial duties. If, for example, the
caste failed to excommunicate the *taravād* of an individual who had sinned against 626
its religious laws, it was believed that the village goddess would strike the village with 613
epidemic, flood, or some such misfortune. Similarly, if incest within the lineage went
undetected or unpunished, the lineage ghosts and the patron goddess might cause the
offenders to die or might bring misfortune on the *taravād* as a whole.

The fact that any member of the *taravād* may suffer as a result of the misdemeanors 613
of any other, carries into the realm of supernatural sanctions the collective respon-
sibility of the *taravād* in social and legal affairs. If a man breaks a ritual rule of the 626
caste, his whole *taravād* is polluted and liable for excommunication. If a death or 783
birth occurs, the whole lineage is temporarily polluted and excluded from normal
social life. At the back of these norms lies the fact that the *taravād* is an economic
and legal corporation. Its property is owned jointly, and the *taravād* is responsible [421]
for the debts of any one member. Its male members must support each other in [476]
feuds against other lineages. It is not surprising that the concept of being members
one of another in secular affairs is projected into the realm of mystical retributions. [628]

The points at which supernatural agents might replace, or act instead of, human
authorities, appear to have been those where a subordinate was wronged by one who was 769
himself a powerful authority and could manipulate the law. Thus lineage ghosts were
probably particularly effective in punishing or setting to rights misdemeanors of the 626
kāranavan himself. I am uncertain whether, in traditional law, junior members could 613
sue in court for the deposition of an erring *kāranavan*. They certainly possessed this
right in British law, but even so, it was very difficult before 1933 to get rid of a *kārana-* [694]
van. The lineage ghosts appear to have provided important sanctions against a *kārana-*
van's misdoings, for they brought misfortune on a *taravād* whose *kāranavan* disgraced
its reputation for hospitality or squandered its property. I was told that the former [787]
custom by which a junior member might be possessed by a ghost and voice its threats
to the *taravād* added force to the complaints of young men who were cheated by
their *kāranavans*. The fact that only the *kāranavan* may propitiate the lineage ghosts [782]
points up both his responsibility to the ghosts to ensure good conduct and prosperity
in his *taravād*, and also his responsibility to his juniors to ensure the favor of the ghosts.

I have myself recorded no case in which lineage ghosts were believed to have actually
prevented a crime on the part of a *kāranavan*, as distinct from punishing one. V. K.

769 Raman Menon, however, records a legend of a mother's brother who deliberately
626 betrayed a nephew, whom he hated, to the vengeance of a lineage currently feuding
613 with his own.[6] The nephew was to have been killed by his enemies on the following
[173] day. But in the night his mother prayed for the return of her son's elder brother who
was absent in a distant land. The lineage ghosts miraculously brought home the brother
in time to save his junior's life. It must be remembered, moreover, that the belief
that the deceased himself would become a lineage ghost capable of wreaking vengeance probably formed a sanction against intralineage murder.

562 Women are excluded from the ancestral shrine during their pollutions and may
[782] not enter it on the day of propitiations. The former prohibition is related to the whole
[841] concept of bad sacredness associated with emissions of the body, which prevents
[829] women from touching or eating with others or entering any sacred place during their
pollutions. That women should be totally excluded from the shrine on days of propitiation seems also to relate to the general position of women in the society. As in most of the higher Hindu castes, women traditionally played a very minor role in economic production, for the work of production was done by the lower castes. A few women were scholars, and a few were even trained in arms, but the Nāyars' occupation as soldiers in general tended to exclude women from work outside the home. The bearing of children was by far the chief value of women. Correspondingly, women were subordinates in the legal sphere. They were throughout life under the legal guardianship of men, might not take part in public deliberations, and might not act as witnesses in the village court. The legal subordination of women may have been partly connected with their comparative lack of value in economic production, and perhaps partly, with the great moral authority they derived from childbearing—for female procreation was very highly valued and male envy of these functions was overt. The cult of lineage
[769] ghosts supports the correct operation of male legal authority within the *taravād*.
The exclusion of women from participation in it, and their exclusion from the shrine on days when their procreative functions were most apparent, perhaps expresses in a formal manner the notion that the power which women derived from these functions was polar and even antipathetic to the legal and economic power of men.

769 Although the lineage ghosts had only subsidiary judicial functions, their cult
613 served in several ways indirectly to maintain right relationships within the *taravād*.
626 First, a *kāranavan* who respected and correctly propitiated his own forebears provided
182 a role model of piety for his juniors in their relations with living elders. Second, the
ghosts, as we have seen, provided some sanctions against a *kāranavan's* ill treatment
769 of his wards. Levy,[7] in connection with the Chinese ancestor cult, has pointed out
171 the importance of having supernatural agents to whom a human authority owes
182 deference, in social units where the authority is not chosen by his subordinates and
cannot easily be manipulated or removed by them. For the authority's good behavior toward his subordinates then becomes a part of his sanctioned duty toward his own supernatural authorities. In the Chinese cult, which in this respect resembles the Brahman, the head of a family must care for his patrilineal descendants because it is part of his duty to the ancestors to provide happy and prosperous offspring. For
769 these, by their own later ancestral offerings, will save the forebears' spirits, and his
613 own, from suffering in the life after death. In the Nāyar case, the *kāranavan* must
626 keep his *taravād* in good order because if he does not do so the lineage ghosts may inflict
182 suffering on all, including himself.

769 613 182 Third, the ghost cult obviously provides one explanation for the cause of misfortunes, and offers a course of action whereby these may supposedly be allayed. Further, the *taravād's* collective responsibility for its misfortunes in a sense makes the ghosts a common threat to its members, for all may suffer from their anger. The ghost cult thus enhances the sense of unity and common destiny of *taravād* members.

769 171 *Psychological analysis.* The problem of the circumstances under which cults of punitive ancestors arise does not seem to have been solved in culture and personality writing. Freud[8] derived all forms of fear of, and taboos relating to, the dead, from ambivalence felt to these kinsfolk during life. Mead[9] in 1930 granted a probable universality of ambivalence to the dead, but pointed out that whereas Western Europeans tend to emphasize affection and grief toward the dead and to suppress hostility, some societies give ceremonial emphasis to the hostility and suppress the expression of affection and grief. Others appear to permit an equal expression of both hostility and grief, and Mead thought that personal conflicts relating to the dead may be almost eliminated when both attitudes find ceremonial expression. She argued that the choice of which attitude should be uppermost in ceremonial expression was "a function of the civilization in which the individual lives," but did not at that time attempt to relate attitudes to the dead to specific types of relationships with the living.

Opler,[10] in an analysis of Chiracahua and Mescalero Apache usages relating to the dead, has shown that these exhibit mixed feelings of grief and hostility, and has derived these from ambivalence to living relatives engendered in the matrilocal extended family. But Opler's analysis, convincing though it is, leaves us again with the problem that probably all social relations, and especially all kinship relations, are to some extent ambivalent. Why then do some societies express ambivalence in mixed attitudes to the dead, others in predominantly hostile attitudes with the benevolent aspects suppressed, and still others in predominantly benevolent attitudes with the hostile aspects suppressed? A more intricate analysis of types of ambivalence is required. Attempts in this direction have been made by a number of recent writers, notably Kardiner, Fortes, Roheim, Hsu, Mead in later writings, and Whiting and Child[11] in a cross cultural survey of beliefs about evil spirits and demons. Building on the theories of these writers, I shall try to find meaningful connections between Nāyar attitudes to lineage ghosts and their attitudes to living matrilineal kinsfolk of the preceding generation.

181 769 [772] Nāyar lineage ghosts are oriented toward the living. Although Nāyars state that good spirits go to a heaven of sensual pleasures and bad spirits to a hell of physical torture, they do not elaborate this belief or refer to it in connection with the cult of lineage ghosts. They believe that their forebears were sorry to die and are envious of the living. The forebears retain affection for their lands and houses and continue to be interested in tangible good things, particularly in food and drink. These attitudes appear to form part of a general this-worldly attitude among traditional Nāyars. As a caste, their chief interests have been in land and houses, political power, and military exploits. [212] They are not ritual specialists. Most Nāyar men and many women were traditionally literate in Malayālam. [538] Malayālam poems, dramas, and translations based on the great epics, the *puraṇas* and the *Bhāgavad Gītā*, brought the content of much Sanskrit literature to them in a comprehensible form. Nevertheless, comparatively few Nāyars were philosophers or scholars. [785] [782] Among the great majority, ascetic practices were oriented chiefly toward averting misfortunes in this life rather than to accumulating religious merit against the life to come.

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181 accumulating religious merit against the life to come. With regard to their interests in
this world, the ancestors resemble their descendants.

Lineage ghosts are powerful beings who can help or harm the living. The effect
769 which they exert on the fortunes of the living is much greater than that exerted by
the living on their own. They can aid their descendants by preserving crops, cattle,
houses, and children, but their punitive characteristics are those most emphasized.
[782] Offerings to ghosts are designed less toward seeking positive good than toward averting
misfortune. There is no idealization of the ghosts as morally superior beings. They
are human in their failings of envy and bad temper, and indeed, even more capricious
than the living. They may punish wrongdoing with a degree of justice, but they do
[784] not look sympathetically into the hearts of propitiants, and are almost as likely to
exact vengeance for accidental mistakes in the performance of rites as for wilful
[787] immorality. Nāyars do not attempt to enter intimate spiritual communion with them
[782] or to please them by inner suffering and renunciation. Rather, the ghosts are bought
off with gifts of food in order that their envy may be appeased.

607 These attitudes to the ancestors[12] are, it seems, directly related to relationships
613 with the senior generation among the living. A man's relationship with his mother's
brother is, from childhood, one of stern discipline. All mother's brothers have authority
578 over their nephews and in traditional households may inflict corporal punishment on
56 adolescents. There is a marked lack of intimacy between senior and junior men within
the *taravād*, and the sanction on a nephew's good conduct is fear of punishment rather
than fear over loss of love. Good *kāranavans* are devoted to their juniors in a stern
and dutiful manner. They are proud of their *taravād* as against the rest of the world,
but they do not exhibit personal tenderness to their juniors. Power is vested in the
senior generation; there is little feeling that a nephew could wield power over his
uncle by withdrawing his emotional support. Great emphasis is placed on a formal
etiquette of dignified and respectful behavior, amounting to partial avoidance, but
neither party need feel that he loves the other in his heart. Nephews will not normally
readily reveal hostility toward their uncles before outsiders, for they wish to preserve
the dignity of the *taravād*. But they do publicly acknowledge hostility under provocation, and more frequently accuse the uncle of aggression toward themselves. That
hostility is a normal component of relationships with mother's brothers is proverbial
among Nāyars. They recognize this as the reason why a formal etiquette of behavior
is indispensable. And even in spite of the stringent rules regulating the intercourse
of mother's brother and sister's son, physical aggression between them may occur.
[626] In spite of the supernatural sanctions against violence within the lineage, I heard
several stories of nephews who poisoned or stabbed their mothers' brothers. Aged
kāranavans of large *taravāds* often complain of their loneliness. They may not behave
intimately with their juniors and know in their hearts that they are hated and envied.
"Indeed," as one Nāyar remarked, "in an old-fashioned *taravād* the position of the
kāranavan is not safe." The office of *kāranavan* is, of course, much coveted. Junior
men commonly number themselves off in order of age-rank as second, third, fourth
men, etc., and with divided feelings await the demise of those above them which
[593] will raise them to higher rank. The relationship between older and younger brothers,
own or classificatory, is only slightly less stern and formal than that between mother's
brother and sister's son.

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562 The relationship of a woman with her mother's brother is less harsh than that

769 crop and cattle blight. These he continued to explain in terms of a childlike picture
731 of powerful supernatural elders.

It must also be noticed that although there are slight differences in the relation-
769 ships of men and women to lineage ghosts, the ghosts are, in general, far more alike
783 than are matrilineal elders. A man's relation with his mother is very different from
154 that with his mother's brother, and his relations with different mother's brothers are
[562] by no means uniform. Yet the ghosts are collectively regarded as both protective and dangerously punitive. It seems probable, therefore, that a Nāyar reprojects his own supergo onto the standardized, institutionalized image of lineage ghosts which his culture provides him. For the superego, like the ghosts, is a composite of the prohibitions imposed by a number of elders. The superego is also formed in part from the individual's own aggression, which he defends against by projecting it upon the generalized parental image which he has internalized. If this view is correct, reprojection of the harsh superego onto ghosts in times of misfortune must serve to reduce guilt. For the offences which the ghosts ostensibly punish with sickness are often inadvertent or trivial ones, such as failure in the correct performance of rites. The astrologer's diagnosis may thus permit him to focus his generalized guilt (concerning deeper, unconscious aggressive impulses) upon a specific, minor lapse of duty on the part of
● [782] himself or one of his kinsmen. He is then able to take practical steps to alleviate his guilt through propitiation of the supernatural agents. The Brahman's offerings on behalf of his ancestors also seem to serve as an alleviation of guilt, but in a different manner. For instead of reprojecting his harsh superego onto ancestral figures, the Brahman apparently projects it wholly outside the area of human relations onto a vindictive god of death, whose hell he believes endangers both his own and his parents' souls. He appears to alleviate his guilt through rites designed to preserve them and himself from this fate.

769 If it is true that the Nāyar reprojects his own superego upon the lineage ghosts,
this would explain why the ghosts are so much more punitive than are living elders.
182 They are thus fitting agents for the infliction of natural misfortunes, which in fact
626 fall more heavily and capriciously than do the punishments of living elders. The fact that all members of the *taravād* are enabled to focus projected aggression and guilt feelings upon the ghosts probably enhances the internal solidarity of the *taravād*, by lifting a portion of these troublesome feelings from inside to outside the group. The cult thus brings together in rites of propitiation these very kinsmen who (in one aspect of their relationship) hate each other, and forges renewed bonds of mutual devotion in the appeasement of beings whom all of them fear.

FUNERALS AND ANNIVERSARIES: THE SANSKRITIC CULTS

76 Although they retained the non-Sanskritic cults of ghosts, the Nāyars long ago
184 adopted many Brahmanical usages in connection with funerals and with rites on the
anniversary of a death. Such usages include cremation rather than burial of the dead,
564 and offerings of rice balls (*bali*), water, and other oblations in the days of pollution following a death. As among Nambūdiri Brahmans, the chief heir, at the end of the period of pollution, enters a period of ascetic mourning (*dīkṣā*) for one year in Cochin and for forty-one days in Kottayam. At the end of this time he may dispose of the bones and ashes in a sacred river. He makes *bali* offerings to the spirit on each day of his mourning, and at its close, performs final offerings which unite the deceased with

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar
Nambudiri Brahmans

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184 eldest son also traditionally observed *dīkṣā* for his father along with the matrilineal heir.

564 Age-rank within the *taravād* finds expression in the rites. Among Nambūdiri
613 Brahmans, if an unmarried but initiated boy dies, his father may perform his funeral
[775] and anniversary rites. For the souls of father and son are dependent upon one another
for salvation. But among Nāyars, a man may not take part in funeral rites for one
junior to him in the *taravād*, for respect toward juniors is inappropriate. A Nāyar
who dies leaving no junior old enough to act as chief mourner is therefore buried
without ceremony and no rites are performed for his ghost.

769 Nāyars have adopted the Brahmanical belief that funeral and anniversary rites
184 assist the spirit in its passage to another world, and that immersion of the ashes in
564 sacred water affords it peace. Like the Brahmans, they acknowledge the theory of
rebirth, and hold that a spirit which is correctly propitiated after death is likely to
[782] be eventually reborn in a high estate. As in the case of the Brahmans, the theory of
karma provides the Nāyars with a moral rationale for their high position in the caste
system, and it is chiefly in this connection that I have heard it quoted. It is difficult to
discover how old are Sanskritic beliefs concerning the soul among Nāyars, and they
are not uniform at the present day. Most Nāyars use the word *pretam* to refer to the
ghost or the soul in all contexts. This is a Sanskrit word (*preta*) for a malevolent
ghost, but it is used by Nambūdiri Brahmans only for alien malevolent ghosts. A
few Nāyars stated that that aspect of the soul which is reborn is the *ātmā*. This Sanskrit
word is used by Brahmans for the soul in connection with rebirth and with union
with the universal soul, called *paramātmā*. The *ātmā*, these Nāyar informants say,
is neither malevolent nor beneficent. It cannot be understood by ordinary people
and is a subject for philosophers. The *pretam*, by contrast, is the punitive ghost of
an ancestor or of one who died violently. It can be only too easily understood even
by the ignorant and does not require deep study. This belief in two souls, or in a soul
and a ghost, may be modern, for it was given by only a few younger informants.

769 At all events, the Sanskritic rites of death are customarily adapted by Nāyars to
184 belief in a malevolent *pretam*, for at every step fear of the *pretam* is referred to. Whereas
564 Brahmans perform the rites ostensibly in order that the soul may be at peace, Nāyars
have traditionally performed them in active fear of the ghost's retaliation should its
782 comfort not be ensured. During the days of pollution, Nāyars offer rice balls before
a palmyra stem set up in the yard before the ancestral house. The *pretam* of the deceased
is believed to enter this stem, and it is believed that it will attack the *taravād* with
further death or with sickness if the offerings are not satisfactorily performed. During
the offerings each Nāyar propitiant in turn wears round his waist a piece of cloth
torn from the wrapper of the corpse in order to associate himself with the spirit.
But inside this cloth Nāyars also tuck a knife, blade uppermost, to ward off the spirit's
attack. After the offerings are made, both Brahmans and Nāyars clap their wet hands
[825] to summon crows to eat the rice balls. If the crows do not come, it is believed that the
spirit has not received the offering. This may then be repeated on the advice of the
astrologer. In Tanjore, Brahmans seemed to regret the miscarriage of the offering
only for the sake of the spirit. But Nāyars regard it as an extremely evil omen, and
[787] fear the ghost's retaliation in the form of a second death within the *taravād*. The
Brahmanical ceremonies themselves contain rites of segregation from the deceased
[764] which are susceptible to the interpretation that those who perform them wish to be
rid of him. Such, for example, is the rite of dashing a pot of water at the head end of

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the pyre toward the close of the cremation, and the disposal of the bones and ashes 184
in a river far from the ancestral house. But among my Brahman informants in Tanjore 564
these rites were carried out without explanation, and hostility to the dead seemed to 782
find no conscious expression. Nāyars performed the same rites in full consciousness 764
of fear and hostility to the ghost. Even at the end of the *dīkṣā* period when the chief
mourner has deposited the ashes in a river, Nāyars believe that Bhairava and Kāla, [716]
messengers of the god of death, dog the mourner's footsteps back to his ancestral
house. He is out of danger from them only after performing final offerings in the house
which gather the ghost to its forebears and thus appease its wrath. Nāyars, like Brahmans, express grief at a death and engage in ceremonial weeping, although neither [152]
caste weeps with the loud vehemence characteristic of the lower polluting castes. But
whereas Brahmans give full expression to grief and guilt, suppressing the hostile
aspect of their ambivalence, Nāyars perform the same rites in consciousness both of
grief and of hostile fear of the dead.

The traditional Nāyar rites and beliefs illustrate the common phenomenon of 76
elements of symbolic culture being diffused from one group to another and endowed 184
with a new emotional content and meaning in accordance with the needs of the
receiving group. The Nāyars presumably adopted Brahmanical death rites centuries 564
ago because of the prestige associated with certain distinctive customs of the highest
group in the caste society. The extensive contact with Brahmans afforded to them by
hypergamous marital unions gave them an unusual exposure to Sanskrit culture.
But through centuries of exposure to Brahmanical custom the Nāyars retained such [782]
characteristically "low caste" features as animal sacrifice to punitive deities, religious
possession, and propitiation of punitive lineage ghosts. I would argue that the Nāyars
and lower castes retained these customs because the emotional dispositions engendered
by their occupations and social relations—in particular, their ways of handling aggression and relationships to authorities—are different from those of Brahmans. Presumably also the Nāyars adapted the Sanskritic death rites to their own role structure
and belief system, because these grew out of and served to uphold norms of relationships
within the *taravād*.

THE CULTS OF ALIEN GHOSTS

In addition to lineage ghosts, Nāyars believe that the spirits of persons of any 769
caste who died prematurely from epidemic, accident, murder, or suicide can bring 184
misfortune to the living. Such ghosts, which I call alien ghosts, haunt the neighborhood
where they died and are particularly malevolent. The misfortunes they inflict include
many kinds of sickness; madness, female barrenness, cattle deaths, house fires, or
poltergeist activities. Like lineage ghosts, most alien ghosts are called *pretams*. In
Cochin, the Sanskrit word *piśāca* is sometimes used to distinguish them from lineage
ghosts. In Kottayam, there is an elaborate cult of certain particularly important
ghosts, which are called *teyyams* (a corruption of the Sanskrit word *deva* 'god').

In Cochin, one or more alien ghosts is sometimes attached to a Nāyar *taravād*, 769
whose members are obliged to arrange for its regular propitiation. The ghost may be 613
that of a person who is known to have died violently, within living memory, on the
taravād's land. Alternatively, when a misfortune occurs in a household, the astrologer 782
may newly discover that the ghost of some such person, long dead, is haunting the [778]
aravād's land. He may order a shrine to be built and propitiations to be made. Shrines

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613 778 782 to alien ghosts are built in the garden of the *taravād* house. They are propitiated annually or in emergency, usually with a cock sacrifice and an offering of toddy. Such alien ghosts are of a lineage other than that of the hosts and are usually of different caste. If a member of the *taravād* dies violently, his successors take care of his ghost in the course of their ancestral propitiations and do not commonly build a special shrine for it in their garden. They may fear such a ghost more than they fear the ghosts of forebears who died naturally, but they will not speak of this to outsiders. Rather, they are likely to deny to others that violent deaths have taken place in their lineage in the past, particularly if the deceased was a suicide or was executed in punishment for a crime. Such a ghost may however be regarded as a source of misfortunes by a Nāyar household of another lineage or by a household of one of the lower castes, expecially it the deceased died on its land or was in some way connected with it. It is then enshrined as an alien ghost in the garden of this house.

769 615 566 564 782 Most commonly, an alien ghost housed in a Nāyar garden is that of a former serf of the property group, of one of the "exterior" agricultural laboring castes of Pulayans, Parayans or Pānans. The legends of such ghosts are nowadays often forgotten, but several Nāyars told me that they are likely to be the ghosts of serfs who died after a quarrel with their masters or who were actually killed by them. The ghost is hostile to the *taravād* as a group and demands regular sacrifices if misfortune is to be averted. It is more hostile and capricious than are lineage ghosts, although it can also afford a certain vague protection to the *taravād* if it is correctly propitiated. Propitiations are made annually by a person of the ghost's own caste, often a Parayan or Pulayan of a family now serving the Nāyar property group. The propitiant's fee and the materials for the offering are provided by the *taravād*.

An alien ghost tends to be angered by persons who walk near its shrine at times other than those of propitiations. Some ghosts are angered only if people approach them round midnight or midday. At night, however, ghosts are able to wander some distance away from their shrines, so that it is possible to approach and offend them
[787] without being conscious of trespassing. In case of sickness or misfortune, the astrologer may diagnose that someone of the *taravād* has unwittingly offended the ghost and may order an emergency offering. After he has made the sacrifice, the low caste
[578] propitiant is likely to become possessed by the ghost and, while in a state of frenzy, to declare its satisfaction or to order further offerings. He may also take the opportunity to voice any grievances harbored by the *taravād's* low caste servants against its *kāranavan*.

A ghost of this kind may occasionally harm someone from outside its hosts' *taravād* who walks on their land at night. It could also harm its low caste propitiant if he failed in the correct performance of the rites. Usually, however, its attacks are confined to its hosts.

The ghost of such a hostile servant is to be distinguished from that of a servant who died heroically and voluntarily in the service of his Nāyar masters. Many Nāyar *taravāds* have legends of faithful serfs who died defending their masters' house during war, saved the lives of women and children, rescued their patrons from accidental death, or committed suicide in grief when a Nāyar patron had been killed. After death the ghosts of these servants are housed along with the *taravād's* lineage ghosts and are honored in ancestral propitiations. Nāyars point out that their heroism even makes the difference of caste irrelevant, for food is offered to them before it is offered

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to lineage ghosts who were junior to them in age. The living of the *taravād* themselves 613
make offerings to them and do them obeisance, whereas the ghosts of hostile serfs are 566
especially polluting and malevolent and can be propitiated only by persons of their 564
own caste.

Even so, the ghost of such a lower caste person who is honored for heroism by 769
the *taravād* of his masters may, if he died violently, be feared as an alien ghost by
other *taravāds*. In Kottayam in the eighteenth century, for example, there lived a 613
certain Nāyar village headman who had as his servant a man of the Tiyyar caste of 566
cultivators. During the invasions of Malabar by the Mysorean Muslim general, Tippu 564
Sultan, in the 1780's, the Nāyar's *taravād* was threatened with conquest and forcible
conversion to Islam. Having sent the women and children of his house into hiding, 175
the *kāranavan* prayed before his lineage's patron goddess until the Muslims were at 782
his gates. He then persuaded his Tiyyar servant to kill him, being unwilling to face the disgrace of circumcision at the hands of the Muslims. Having slain his master, the servant hid himself in an outhouse of the *taravād*. In the night he went forth and attacked the Muslims single-handed, killing several of them to avenge his master, before he was himself put to death. The ghost of this servant is now propitiated along with the lineage ghosts of his master's *taravād*. It is also, however, propitiated as an alien ghost by several other *taravāds* in the neighborhood.

Occasionally, malevolent alien ghosts are those of Nāyars who died violently, 769
often in expiation of some crime. They may have committed suicide after being 613
outcaste for contravention of religious laws, or in the case of a woman, may have been
killed by their matrilineal kinsmen after cohabiting with low caste men. A woman 684
called Kadangōtt Makkam, also of Kottayam, became a ghost in this way. According [762]
to legend, she was suspected by her sister-in-law of having sexual relations with an
Oilmonger. Her brothers banished her from the *taravād*. She was agonized at the
thought of leaving her children, and drowned them in the *taravād's* well. Her *kāranavan* [682]
and brothers were then obliged to stab her to death—the customary penalty for
fornication outside the caste, and perhaps, also, for murder within the *taravād*. She [842]
became an alien ghost particularly liable to prevent women from bearing children, and is established in the gardens of several local *taravāds*.

Such alien ghosts, although Nāyar, are also propitiated by an officiant of the lower 769
caste. The propitiant is usually from some caste which specializes in exorcism and 564
counter-magic, such as Mannāns (washermen), Kanisans (astrologers, who in any 782
case diagnose the misfortune and advise the propitiation) or Pānans (umbrella-makers, exorcists and agricultural workers). The mode of propitiation is the same as in the case of a low caste ghost.

Finally, an alien ghost is occasionally that of a Brahman who died violently. Brahman ghosts, or Brahmarākṣas, unlike all other ghosts, must be propitiated with vegetarian offerings by a Brahman priest hired for the purpose. But Brahman priests,
unlike low caste officiants, never enter a state of voluntary possession by ghosts. [787]
Religious possession is particularly a low caste institution. It is not practiced by Brahmans, and when found among Nāyars, it is practiced by young men, women, and other persons who lack secular power. Brahmans do not need to become possessed by their ghosts and deities, for they have the power to demand whatever offerings and fees they require. Low caste propitiants need the authority of a supernatural agent in order to make demands on their high caste masters.

769 No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities,
776 or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found
[782] throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of
[564] poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately
sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste
173 person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular
769 Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends
776 became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kutti-
chāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a
782 washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a
sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-
owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf.
One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he
had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had
him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and
disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune
until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit
had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kutti-
782 chāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken
769 of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

184 I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual
taravāds in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are
776 grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels
564 the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local
796 government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed
[794] either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of
commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally
[613] enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her
annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes
such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more
minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small
[753] shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants
of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes
in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high
castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing
imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make
[787] offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed
by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements
both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks
before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the court-
yards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons'
wrath.

769 In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād*
184 was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults
776 of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent
796 than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that
564 ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin
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taravād may enshrine only one or two alien ghosts particularly associated with it; 184
leaving the majority of local ghosts to be propitiated at the central village temple. 776
a wealthy Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam builds shrines in its garden for six or eight 796
alien ghosts and finances elaborate propitiations on their behalf. Such spirits are in 564
Kottayam called *teyyams*. As in Cochin, the spirits are often the ghosts of Nāyar or
low caste persons who died violent deaths—for example, girls who died violently 613
before marriage, women excommunicated or executed for sexual offences, persons 782
killed by lightning, servants executed by their masters, or warriors who died in battle. Usually, miraculous elements are interwoven into their legends. Sometimes, they become merged with common minor deities such as Vettakkorumagan, Kandhākaranan, or some species of Bhagavadi. In a few cases, they have become associated with some episode from the puranic myths and their human origin is lost sight of. As in the village temple rites of Cochin, these ghosts in Kottayam are propitiated, on behalf of the Nāyar *taravād*, by selected persons from the lower castes. These are chiefly Vannans (washermen) and Malayans (exorcists).[22] Annually, the propitiants assemble in the Nāyar courtyard and recite the myths of origin of their spirits. Later,
they make and receive blood sacrifices to the spirits, and finally, while possessed by [787]
them, perform spectacular masked dances and declare the spirits' satisfaction to an assembled company of many castes. These festivals take place throughout the whole of several nights in the month of January to February and draw vast crowds from the surrounding neighborhood.[23]

I have so far dealt with modes of propitiation of, and possession by, alien ghosts. 787
In addition, both in Cochin and Kottyam, Nāyars believe that certain persons can, 754
through appropriate rites and spells, gain private control over alien ghosts and minor 564
deities and engage in witchcraft or sorcery through their power. In what I call witchcraft,[24] the individual uses the power of his patron spirit in order to take the form of a
bull, dog, jackal, or other animal. In this form he touches his foe in the night, causing [753]
him to fall ill with fever, to become insane, or even to die. Witches always belong to
one of the lowest castes of Parayans, Pulayans, Pānans or (in Kottayam) Malayans. [761]
They usually attack persons of Nāyar or other high caste whom they themselves hate. Occasionally, however, a normal person of any caste, even a Nāyar, may hire a witch to attack a personal enemy.

A sorcerer performs rites and recites spells to an alien ghost or minor deity over which he has control and causes it to pass magically into the body of an enemy, thus bringing about fever, miscarriages in women, insanity or death. Sorcerers can also bring about the deaths of cattle. Nāyars attribute sorcery chiefly to lower caste persons. For whereas the Nāyars predominantly worship Bhagavadi and certain Sanskrit deities, the castes below Nāyars specialize in the propitiation of evil ghosts and minor deities, and it is solely with these lower supernatural beings that witchcraft and sorcery are associated. Washermen, astrologers and umbrellamakers, who specialize in exorcising ghosts from the bodies of patients, are particularly suspected by Nāyars of themselves engaging in sorcery. Nāyars do, however, occasionally suspect Nāyars of other lineages, particularly affines with whom they have quarreled, of practicing sorcery or of hiring low caste witches or sorcerers to attack them.

Witchcraft does not usually require the diagnosis of an astrologer. A Nāyar of nervous disposition simply suspects that a low caste man has bewitched him if he falls ill after encountering an animal in the night. Sorcery is usually diagnosed by an

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their ghosts unusually dangerous. Instead of being burned by their matrilineal kin, 564
the corpses of these persons are buried hastily by men of the washermen's caste—a 787
caste particularly associated with demon propitiation and voluntary ghost possession. 152
The spirits of these victims become alien ghosts. In their anger they may possess and 182
cause injury to persons of any caste in their community. But only the lower castes
can induce shamanistic possession by them, and it is chiefly (some say only) the lower [766]
castes who can control them to work good or ill. Appropriately, Nāyars believe that
low caste witches perform additional rites connected with highly polluting objects
and places in order to enhance their evil power. Witches, for example, are believed to [754]
procure a magical substance by abstracting the foetus from the body of a pregnant
woman and boiling it in a cremation ground, to the accompaniment of spells to a
favorite ghost or patron demon.

There is, however, a qualitative difference between the Nāyar fear of direct 769
attack from an alien ghost and the fear of witchcraft or sorcery. An element of morality
enters into the former fear, even though alien ghosts are more wanton and capricious 613
than lineage ghosts. Although they are malevolent and hateful, alien ghosts must, 182
like lineage ghosts, be respected and propitiated, and there is a feeling that they have 564
the right to be as they are. When they are associated with regular cults of the *taravād*
and the village, moreover, alien ghosts can also afford some vague measure of protection
from misfortune to those Nāyars who conscientiously arrange for their propitiation.
It follows, therefore, that the alien ghost attached to a *taravād* or a village temple
acts in some measure as a kind of conscience for the Nāyar in his relations with low
caste people. For a Nāyar *taravād* which arranges grand festivals for its alien ghosts,
lavishing gifts on the low caste officiants who propitiate them and represent them as
oracles, is also likely to be a *taravād* which has good relations with its lower caste
servants in all contexts of living. In the case of the Nāyar relation to alien ghosts of [154]
his *taravād* and his village, as in the case of his relation to lineage ghosts, the concept of
reprojection of the superego may therefore be appropriate, as well as that of the
simple projection of aggressive id impulses. For while there seems no doubt that the
Nāyar projects on to alien ghosts some of the aggression which he has toward the lower
castes, just as he projects onto lineage-ghosts some of the aggression he feels toward
matrilineal elders, these ghosts act also as stern monitors of his conduct in relationships,
respectively, with the lower castes and with matrilineal kin.

The situation is somewhat different with regard to beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery. 754
It is true that a Nāyar who has recently wronged an untouchable or an affine may be 769
one most likely to suspect untouchables or affines of attacks by sorcery. But he does
not—at least openly—phrase the attack in terms of justifiable retaliation for his own 564
wrongdoing. Instead, he speaks of some anonymous affine or low caste person who,
out of his own envy and wickedness, has used his evil power over a patron ghost in
order to harm an innocent person. Nor does the Nāyar respond to the attacks of witches [782]
and sorcerers by humble propitiation of the possessing demon. Instead he engages a
low caste practitioner of his own to exorcise the demon with the help of a superior [755]
ghostly power. Thus, while both the belief in sorcery and the public cults of alien
ghosts probably reveal, indirectly, the projection of Nāyar aggression against out-groups,
they operate in different social contexts. Witchcraft and sorcery are regarded,
by Nāyars who are the recipients of these attacks, as the evil work of envious persons
against those more successful than themselves. They are seen as covert substitutes for

754 forms of direct aggression which would be condemned by law. I am uncertain whether
769 low caste people actually practice sorcery, but it seems very probable that they do.
564 If they do, it is also very probable that they regard their actions as forms of retaliation
which are morally justifiable, although outside the framework of the law. By contrast,
alien ghosts institutionally attached to the *taravād* and the village have the support
of all right-minded persons and are more comparable to institutionalized secular
authorities. For they are concerned with the overall maintenance of interdependent
and harmonious relations between castes of the community, and their cults are a
public, collective acknowledgement of the need for these relationships.

564 A complete analysis of alien ghost cults would, of course, require full discussion
769 of their role in the lives of the lower castes themselves. I lack space here for such a
discussion but will make one or two relevant points. In each of these lower castes
there were cults of familial ghosts. These, though less elaborate than the Nāyar cult
of lineage ghosts, fulfilled similar intrafamilial functions. Some lower caste households
[778] also erected one or more unhewn stones in their gardens which were believed to
enshrine male or female alien ghosts or minor deities. These spirits seem to have fulfilled,
for the household itself, similar functions to those of the *dharma devī* of a Nāyar
taravād. They were propitiated by the low caste householder. Nāyars believed that a
low caste man could also control such a household spirit, or some personal spirit over
which he had gained individual sway, to bring harm on an enemy through sorcery.
Lower caste persons certainly believed that some members of their castes possessed
these powers, and it seems probable that some persons did try to employ them. Household or personal spirits could also be used by powerful owners to exorcise other harmful
spirits from the bodies of high or low caste people suffering from attacks by sorcery.

564 The Nāyar's relationship to these lower castes was therefore one of secular authority
152 combined with some ability to oppress them in the economic and political spheres.
754 In addition, the Nāyar projected his aggression against them in the belief that they
might harm him through witchcraft or sorcery. The lower caste man's relationship
to the Nāyar was one of submission. He could not express direct aggression toward
the Nāyar. He probably did, however, express aggression toward a Nāyar enemy
covertly through sorcery. It is possible that a few low caste persons in addition believed
themselves capable, through witchcraft, of assuming the form of an animal and bringing
harm to an enemy of higher caste. It must also be mentioned that low caste persons
believed others of their caste to be capable of sorcery against themselves. Witchcraft,
769 however, seems to have been confined to relationships between low and high castes.

The lower castes of the village also owed allegiance to the Nāyar goddess Bhagavadi,
564 who was enshrined in Cochin in the village temple, and in Kottayam in small temples
782 attached to particular *taravāds*. The lower castes could, however, approach Bhagavadi
only through the propitiation of alien ghosts attached to the *taravād* or the temple.
613 In the context of these propitiations, the lower caste officiant's relationship to his
776 Nāyar hosts was a complex combination of aggression, authority, cooperation, and
152 submission. In the *teyyam* festival of a Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam, for example, lower
caste officiants must first humbly gain permission from the living Nāyar *kāranavani*
the Nāyar lineage ghosts and the *taravād* goddess before starting their own propitiations.
In the offerings to the *teyyams* which follow, the officiant's attitude to these minor
deities is ostensibly one of humility, although the actual performance of the blood
sacrifices permits considerable expenditure of aggression. Later, when the officiant

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dons his mask and becomes possessed by his *teyyam*, he may adopt an authoritative 764
or aggressive attitude to his Nāyar hosts, demanding gifts or threatening them with 564
misfortune before conferring his blessing. He may not, of course, physically attack 782
the Nāyars. Indeed, he is, while possessed, likely to solicit admiration by inflicting 613
physical suffering on himself, usually by burning himself with torches or rolling in
the red hot ashes of a fire. After the oracular pronouncements, having doffed his mask, [787]
the officiant again becomes the servant of the *taravād* and humbly accepts his fee. [085]
For the low caste officiant, therefore, these festivals permit a limited, stylized expression of aggression and a temporary assumption of authority toward their high caste masters. At the same time, the festivals underline both the need for interdependence between the castes, and ultimately, the lower castes' permanent, secular role as submissive servants.

Functions of the cults of alien ghosts. My discussion of alien ghost institutions in the 769
general context of Nāyar handling of aggression has necessarily pointed to some of
their social and psychic functions. These may, it seems, be summarized as follows. 182
First, the cults permitted, in a harmless manner, the handling of aggression which 152
arose in relations between castes. Second, whether or not witchcraft or sorcery were [754]
actually practiced, the belief that those whom he wrongfully harassed could arm
themselves with these ritual weapons must have acted as a deterrent to the Nāyar [626]
authority who was tempted to oppress low caste subordinates, or to favor his affines at the expense of his matrilineal juniors. Through witchcraft and sorcery, alien ghosts, therefore, might help to prevent injustices which could not readily be brought before a secular authority.

Third, these institutions brought together in ritual cooperation the very categories 769
of persons whose mutual ambivalence provided the ultimate motive force for the 564
institutions themselves. In the case of witchcraft and sorcery, there existed a compli-
cated interplay of hostilities and alliances which, over time, balanced each other. All 182
Nāyars feared the harmful supernatural power of the lower castes, and this gave unity to their caste. In a particular instance, however, a Nāyar who believed himself attacked by an individual low caste practitioner, or by another Nāyar with the help of such a practitioner, could obtain relief only by engaging the ritual assistance of some other
officiant from one of the suspected castes. In the case of the cults of alien ghosts institu- [152]
tionally attached to his *taravād* and his village temple, it seems that the Nāyar's [154]
generalized fear of and hostility to outgroups was turned outside the area of human relations and focussed upon supernatural agents feared by all. But again, only willing and friendly ritual cooperation with lower caste officiants could ward off supernatural attacks from the whole community, including the Nāyars.

It seems probable to me that one of the most important functions of all religious 796
ritual, if not the important, is this resolution of conflict within individuals and within 769
groups. The manner in which this is achieved varies greatly. The rituals of rebellion[28]
and the initiation rites[29] analyzed by Gluckman, for example, on the surface bear little 152
resemblance to Nāyar cults of the dead. But as Gluckman has shown, their broad 182
social functions are the same. Institutionalized religious ritual, like the private rites of obsessional neurotics, permits to the individual a disguised expression of his aggression, while at the same time reassuring him that his control over the direct physical expression of aggression is unimpaired. But institutionalized ritual does far more than this. It has not only temporary therapeutic value for the individual, but is also interwoven

769 with social, legal, and economic institutions in such a way that it resolves recurrent
conflicts within them and thus affords them support. For institutionalized ritual
152 draws into cooperation, in common acts and a common belief system, the very categories
182 of persons upon whose mutual ambivalence the rites are founded. More than this, by bringing home to the participants a sense of their common helplessness in face of the dangers and mysteries which confront man both in his own nature and in his world, ritual appears to transmute their very hatred into sentiments of mutual dependence and love.

MODERN CHANGES IN CULTS OF THE DEAD

178 At the present day the cult of lineage ghosts tends to be retained in its traditional
769 form only in the most traditional households—those having residential and economic
613 norms most closely approximating the traditional pattern, and living in the old style of ancestral house. In the new houses built in the past twenty years there is no ancestral shrine, and varying degrees of modification and attrition are observable in ancestral and death rites in these modern types of household.

596 In households comprising an elementary family or a congerie of mixed matrilineal,
178 cognatic, and affinal kin, the cult of lineage ghosts has died out in its traditional form. In some families emergency propitiations are still made to the ghosts of kinsfolk on
769 the advice of an astrologer. But such a ghost may now be that of any relative who died
782 in the house, and the propitiation may be carried out by any adult male resident. In one Cochin house, for example, lived an old woman, her elder widowed daughter,
[613] and her children, and her younger daughter, daughter's husband and their children. The old woman's son, who would traditionally have been *kāranavan*, had taken his share of property and gone to live with his wife. When the younger daughter's small girl fell ill with fever, the astrologer advised a propitiation of the ghost of the elder daughter's husband, who had died in this house and been buried near it three years previously. The food offering was made by the child's father in a corner of the living room. In this case neither ghost nor propitiant were members of the *taravād*. Fifty years ago neither one of them could have been concerned in this *taravād's* ancestral rites.

613 In some households, regular collective offerings to lineage ghosts are still made in
178 July and October, but the form of the rites has changed. Cooked rice balls are offered as in *śrāddham* instead of the old offerings of cooked food. In Cochin in 1952 there
769 was no prohibition of alcohol. But even so, many modern families despised the old
782 offerings of toddy, meat, and arrack and substituted vegetarian food with coconut juice, or else performed the Sanskritic rites. Even in traditional *taravāds* whose members have not yet divided their property, educated *kāranavans* are now often unwilling to perform the old-fashioned rites. Such was the case in one wealthy *taravād* of a Kottayam village headman. The *kāranavan*, a university graduate and a politician, felt that he must maintain the old ceremonies for the sake of his *taravād's* local reputation, but would not perform them himself. Instead he persuaded his younger son to carry out the offerings to the lineage ghosts and the annual cock sacrifice to Bhagavadi. This youth was, of course, of another *taravād*. Traditionally he would not even have been permitted to enter his father's ancestral shrine. In many households there are now no ancestral propitiations, for many now deny to lineage ghosts the power to bless or harm.

178 was still undivided commented to me on this change. "In my *taravād*," he said, "I
613 dare not speak before the *kāranavan* without standing and placing my hand before
604 my mouth. But in K. *taravād*, after their partition, I have seen the nephews sitting to play cards with their uncle and passing the cigarette from their mouth to his. When I saw this I knew that relationship means property, and without property there is no relationship."

178 Moreover, the change to elementary family households does not merely entail
594 a shift of the same disciplinary functions from the mother's brother to the father.
152 Nāyar fathers have a tradition of indulgent tenderness toward their children and are loth to discipline them. Even when they are forced to do so, the techniques of dis-
593 cipline differ from those in a traditional *taravād* house. In the intimate atmosphere of the small elementary family household, traditional etiquette is abandoned. Children
[154] learn to obey both parents from love more than from fear. There appears to be a much deeper repression of aggression than in the traditional setting, and correspond-
[769] ingly, many young Nāyars cannot entertain the notion that their parents' ghosts could act punitively toward them. It seems probable that such changes in the modes of handling aggression—affected also by the collapse of the military tradition and the modern legal ban on all forms of physical aggression—may also lie behind the repugnance of modern Nāyars for such other traditional religious forms as blood sacrifice and spirit possession.

178 Also important in the abandonment of ghost cults is, however, an increased tendency toward the adoption of Sanskrit rites. This tendency, which has marked all
564 the non-Brahman castes during the past hundred years or so, I would associate with
177 increasing mobility within the caste system and, most recently, with its gradual collapse. For the Nāyars, as for the lower castes, the Brahmans are no longer a group with whom they have fixed status relationships. Instead, the Brahmans are now a reference group whom the Nāyars emulate and with whom they compete in the struggle for high rank and respectability. Some Nāyars who still hold their traditional beliefs in ancestral spirits and deities deliberately "purge" their rites of non-Sanskritic elements in order to gain respectability. Others have changed both rites and beliefs toward a modified form of the Brahmanical religion, even while they are busy repudiating the religious authority of the Brahman. Yet others, whose number is probably
[829] increasing, repudiate both Brahmanical and non-Sanskritic religions in their orthodox forms. Instead, they work out for themselves a more or less agnostic world view with humanitarian ideals, in which ceremonies, if they figure at all, figure only as acts of piety toward respected persons.

178 The cults of alien ghosts are also changing their form and gradually dying out.
769 This change accompanies the gradual collapse of the caste system as a system of ranked occupational groups linked by hereditary service ties. The collapse of the caste system
564 itself results from the growth of the capitalist market economy and the democratization of political institutions. Some Nāyars retain their beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery, but the categories of persons whom they suspect are no longer solely caste
[755] determined. They are as likely to include fellow factory workers or competitors in
[782] government service, irrespective of caste. Professional exorcists of appropriate caste are often no longer available, for many have left their traditional work. So also have many of the low caste families who formerly propitiated ghosts and minor deities associated with village temples or with Nāyar *taravāds*. Since the passing of the Temple Entry

825
171 deity. Besides these, there are innumerable private snake
shrines, particularly in pious households.

753 All diseases or misfortunes are due to the neglect of snakes.
825 Leprosy, itches, sterility of women and deaths due to poison,
171 are attributed to the anger of snake gods. The remedy for
snake-bite lies in the propitiation of serpents through worship
782 at the snake shrine. If no such shrine exists, then a diligent
778 search is made and a 'snake stone' is dug up from the vicinity.
Thereafter this accidental find of the snake stone is duly consecrated and worshipped, and all the erstwhile troubles are attributed to the inadvertent neglect of the sacred stone. The person
[766] dying of snake-bite is taboo, because his body is supposed to be occupied thereafter by the snake god, and it needs to be disposed of in a special manner with particular reverence and specific rituals.

771 Among the Nayars of South India snake worship assumes
825 unique importance. It is popularly believed that in early times a
778 Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmin brought the serpents with him
796 and left them in their present abode. He however promised to
173 return one day but never did. Strangely enough, in Travancore,
a Pambakattu Nambutiri family still resides and is not permitted to enter the Manarsalil temple for fear that the snakes might leave the area and follow the brahmin to his abode. In a special ceremony called *kavu muttam* or the shifting of the snake shrines from one place to another in the compound of the house—if accidentally the shrine is awkwardly situated in a plot of land where construction is to begin—the Pambakattu Nambutiri is called specially to do the necessary shifting ceremony. He purifies the new area and transfers the shrine to the newly consecrated spot, to the accompaniment of sacred incantations. Thereafter there is feasting and the brahmin is paid money and is presented with a set of new clothes. This is in striking coincidence with the legend of origin, and lends credence to the story of the origin of snake worship, particularly in Manarsalil temple in Quilon, as being connected with Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmins.

778 The plans of snake shrines have much in common, though some are small and some big. The Manarsalil temple

is surrounded by a series of concentric circles as it were, on 778
the outside is a wide road where fairs are held and much
commerce goes on on festive days. The low castes cannot [564]
go beyond this outer fringe. Lodged within, is the garden 778
where the snakes are to be seen in their natural habitat. In this 825
area is a sacred tank, the water of which is rather dirty due to
falling vegetation, but which is reputed to be medicinal in pro-
perty. Here too is a very large vessel into which milk is poured
by the priest so that the snakes might be well fed. Within this
belt of vegetation and bushes is the shrine itself. There is
a verandah with a central hall called *mandapa* with an open
space in front, and in the centre is the platform where the
snake deities are enshrined. There are two images here, one
of Nag Raj with five heads and the other of a serpent with
only one head. This is the inner sanctuary where only the
priest enters. In Manarsalil temple a virgin priestess conducts
the most sacred rites and is considered to be the guardian of
the serpents.

A similar position pertains among the Meitheis [171]
of Manipur, where a priestess looks after the serpent god
called Pak-hangba.[8] Near the verandah is a sacred well from [782]
which water is drawn as offering to the deities and is after-
wards distributed to the devotees as holy water. It is believed
that only pious people can see the snakes in the forest and the
wicked cannot. The devotee considers himself blessed if
he is able to catch a glimpse of the snake while on his way to
the temple.

The common private snake shrine in Travancore lies within 825
the compound of the house, often near the boundary, and away 778
from the main building, in order to best preserve its sanctity 35
and to avoid accidental pollution by inadvertent trespass by 771
some members of the family. The abode of the snake god is
called *sarpa kavu*, and this is usually a raised patch of land
surrounded by bushes and trees. In the foliage there must be a [824]
plant yielding milky sap and in the absence of such a plant, one
is planted near the shrine. The trees near the shrine are never cut
and the area in the vicinity of the *sarpa kavu* is kept very clean. 825
Often granite images of many-headed snakes with spreading 778
771

825
778 hoods are placed in the shrine, and no insect or rat or other
771 animal is killed in the consecrated spot. Even broken
bits of snake images are worshipped and they are set
up in a row. No image or snake-stone is permitted to fall
down, as that is considered to be inauspicious. On the inner
surface of the hood of the snake is carved a seated female figure.

825 These sacred snakes are supposed to be different from the
771 ordinary serpents. They are given the status of benign family
776 deities and are presumed to possess strange powers and the
attribute of gods. They are revered and they deign to live
only under ceremonially pure conditions and surroundings,
accepting only vegetarian offerings and abhorring animal
[782] sacrifice. In contrast mention may be made of the Thlen of the
Khasis which demands human blood as offering. In the event
825 however of their abode being polluted, e. g., by a menstruating
783 woman, the serpents are angered, and unless propitiated may
782 cause disease or harm to the offender. The sacred serpent
776 called *sarpam* is supposed to be small, about 6 to 18 inches
341 in length and is golden in colour. It is highly poisonous
but ordinarily does not do any harm. If properly propitiated
it guards the family and brings good luck and prosperity;
753 but if neglected, insulted, or otherwise uncared for, it causes
skin disease, leprosy or loss of sight. Such a punishment
is visited on the offender or on his near relatives. As a
784 consequence certain taboos are attached to the shrines and no
841 menstruating or pregnant woman may come within six yards
843 of the shrine, nor should anyone enter it without taking
a bath.

796 The actual worship or *puja* is conducted either once or
782 twice a year. The priest cooks rice in milk and adds
pieces of ripe plantain to it, with a few flowering heads of
the sacred *tulsi* plant dropped in towards the end. The
offering is cooked on a special oven near the *sarpa kavu*
in a bell-metal vessel. Thereafter, the priest pours some water
over the snake idols to ceremonially bathe them and places a
bunch of areca-nut palm in efflorescence on the head of the
image in a diagonal fashion. The idol is then anointed with
turmeric powder and basil leaves and flower petals are

showered on it, and it is often garlanded. Incantations and *mantras* are recited by the priest during the ceremony. 796 782

Bell-metal oil lamps are lit in front of the images and their number is usually 3, 5 or 7. In each lamp there are 5 to 7 wicks pointing in different directions. Only coco-nut oil or *ghee* is used in these ceremonial lamps. In front of these lamps are placed three banana leaves with the cut end of the leaf facing the image and the tip pointing away from it, facing north or east. On one of the leaves some uncooked rice is placed and a husked coco-nut is kept over it, while in the other leaf unhusked paddy is heaped with a coco-nut placed on it. The eyes of the coco-nut are away from the snake idol and are towards the tip of the banana leaf. On the third leaf are placed a few small bananas of a special variety called *kadali*, because *kadali* is referred to in the Vedas. [354] [801]

The boiled rice offering is then placed near the shrine and some money is offered to the idol by dropping it in the oil of the lamp. These preparations are offered to the snake god who is supposed to partake of them. Thereafter the *prasad* or the offering is distributed among the members of the family, and the priest gets half of it. The *prasad* must not be eaten by a crow or dog as this is a bad omen. After the worship, the contents of the leaves are given to the priest who therefore takes great pains to see that this particular ceremony is well conducted.

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Once a month or once every three months, low caste Hindus called Pulluvans visit the houses which have snake shrines. Usually they come on Tuesdays or Fridays, and they sing songs in praise of the snake gods. This is done in a rather crude manner to the accompaniment of crude single-stringed instruments called *veena kunju*. For this invocation, an oil lamp is lit before the shrine, and the above-mentioned three banana leaves and their respective contents are placed before the image of the serpent. Usually a woman accompanies the male singer and joins in the chorus, playing the while upon a crude drum. After the praise has been adequately rendered, the ceremony is brought to a close and the musician gets his share of money and materials. This ceremony is meant to propitiate and [535] [534]

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796 [564] please the serpent god and to flatter him so that he may bear the welfare of the host in mind, and guard the family against disease, misfortune and harm accruing from human or supernatural agencies.

There are three important ceremonies in connection with serpent worship called *sarpa yaga*, *sarpa tulal* and *sarpa preeti*. They are conducted either at home or in the temple, usually on Sundays, since it is held that the serpents are most powerful and lenient on that day and are in a benign mood for granting favours.

[791] *Sarpa preeti* is conducted in the house whenever misfortune occurs. The astrologer is consulted who decrees that a curse is upon the house and the serpents are angry. Thereupon elaborate worship is conducted with much ritual, and propitiation of the angered deities is effected and normalcy returns.

796 755 *Sarpa tulal* is a form of divine cure of the afflicted. The unfortunate victims of leprosy, mental or other diseases gather to worship the serpent gods praying for a cure. The priest conducts the worship and the afflicted go into a trance-like state and dance in religious fervour. Thereafter the priest throws consecrated turmeric powder on their heads and faces. The devotee feels blessed and cures are believed to occur.

796 *Sarpa yaga* is an annual festival in which many families jointly contribute to hold the ceremony. It is held usually for the collective prosperity of the village and lasts for two or three days. The afflicted and diseased persons dance in a trance for a long time and are given coco-nut water by the priest. At the end of the *puja* the priest sprinkles turmeric powder over the heads of the devotees and pours out holy water thrice in the palm of their hands.

825 753 776 One of the special attributes of snakes is their power over disease. The snake deities are specifically importuned for the prevention of skin diseases, stomach disorders, mental disturbances and for sterility. Leucoderma and leprosy are specially regarded as due to the curse of snakes who might have been angered by some unwitting disrespect shown towards them, or by accidental misdemeanour
680 on the part of the inadvertant devotee. Of particular impor-

of particular impor- 842
tance is the ritual conducted in the case of barren women who 755
seek divine intercession of the serpent gods. The afflicted 782
couple come on a Sunday morning to the snake temple
after a purificatory bath and after putting on new gar- 776
ments. They request the priest to conduct a propitiatory *puja* and offer flour to the deity. Thereafter, a bronze plate on which the name of the person is carved is placed inverted at a spot. After a year when they have been blessed with a child, they repair to the temple once more to offer thanks for the boon granted. The child is helped to lift the bronze plate and under it a small serpent is observed signifying that
all is well. In the event of there being no snake underneath, [763]
it is taken as a bad omen predicting the death of the child. If even after ten years no child is born to the couple, the unretrieved bronze plate is discarded, on the presumption that the deity has not seen fit to grant the wishes of the devotees.

There is also a class of pious people who have through their 755
devotion to, and worship of, the snake deity, acquired the art of 759
curing victims of snake-bite. They are called *sarpa vaidyas* and cases of snake-bite are brought to them for treatment. The man chants certain magical formulae and tears a betel leaf in front of a pot of milk. The serpent is supposed to come out of hiding and to withdraw the venom, thus effecting a gradual cure.

But modern trends are contrariwise, and a gradual decline 178
is discernible in the ritual of snake worship in a large majority 771
of households which have snake shrines. Less emphasis is paid to the traditional worship of the serpent, and what little propitiation is done is more or less symbolic. Makeshift arrangements are often made, and worship by proxy is offered by the priest, in the absence of the family members, who merely pay a fixed sum to the priest for his labours, and thereby absolve themselves of the guilt of neglecting the snake gods.

Apart from simplification of the ritual of snake worship, [778]
yet another symptom of the decay of the cult appears to be the reduced importance that is given to the upkeep of the existing snake shrines. Many erstwhile sacred shrines are in a dilapidated condition. Perhaps in future, snake worship itself might become a thing of the past.

REFERENCES

[1] Tod: *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, 86.

[2] Ibbetson & Maclagan: *Glossary of Tribes and Castes of Punjab & N. W. F. P.*, 149. 113

[3] Gurdon: *The Khasis*, 98-102.

[4] Dubois & Beauchamps: *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, 641.

[5] Hodson: *The Meitheis*, 110.

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301 wash the face with the hand on which is a "tambâk" [515] ring. I see in my notes a record of an individual who wore one of these rings on the second finger of the left [789] hand. They are common.

One individual wore two rings of the pattern called triloham (lit: metals) on the ring finger of each hand. Each of these rings was made during an eclipse!

[782] One individual wore a silver bangle as a vow. It was to be given up at the next festival to be held at a place called Kottiôre, a famous festival in North Malabar, the scene of it being far away in the forest under the hills. He also wore a "tambâk" ring on the ring finger of the right hand for luck; and a thin iron ring on the ring finger of the left hand.

[304] One individual wore no jewellery, but there was a small circular tattooed spot in the centre of the forehead over the glabella. Tattooing is not common. This individual is the only one of those examined who was tattooed.

Women.—The style of the jewellery worn by the women will be seen in the *plate.*[1] It is altogether unlike [171] any other South Indian jewellery. The necklaces are almost identical in form, shape and general character with those of Sindh. Silver is never worn.

[304] The lobes of the ears are dilated in childhood generally in the sixth month and in them are worn large spiral rings of white metal or the more solid "tôda," really a handsome ornament, in the groove of which the elongated ear-lobe is almost concealed. It is made of gold. Properly speaking the tôda is an ornament worn exclusively by the Nâyar women. Several necklaces are often worn at the same time. The Venetian sequin, 301 which probably first found its way hither in the days of 177 Vasco da Gama and Albuquerque, is one of those coins +564 which, having found favour with a people, is used persistently in ornamentation long after it has passed out of currency; thus illustrating the well-known thesis that things originally made for use, by and by pass into ornament. There are instances of this use of coins in Europe, of course, as amongst the Swabian peasantry. So fond are the Malayalis—those of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore—of the sequin that to this day there is quite a large trade in imitations of the coin for purposes of ornament. Such is the persistence of its use that the trade extends to brass and even copper imitations of the sequin. The former, brought from Europe, are often seen to bear the

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[1] [see plate X, facing p. 220 -- An.]

Hair on the arms.—In half the number of subjects it varied from moderate to thick; in the other half it was slight to very slight or (in a few) absent altogether. 142 564*

Hair on the legs.—In more than half it varied from moderately thick to very thick. One was noted as "like a bear." In one individual only it was noted as very slight.

Colour of the skin.—The darkest (one only) was between 42 and 43 (Broca's colour types). Two others were nearly as dark. The fairest was 44. Two others were nearly as fair. The average is between these extremes.

Colour of the eyes.—The darkest was No. 1 (Broca's colour types). The lightest between 2 and 3. Rather more than half were 2 or shades of 2, generally lighter, while nearly one-half were No. 1.

Ornaments.—As a rule the ordinary earrings are worn. A section of the clan calling themselves Ellenkiria (or Elleng Kiria—tender Kiria?) wear no earrings, though their ears are pierced. Some members of this section told me they never wore earrings, while others said they could wear them as a rule, but they could not wear them when they went to the Kôvilakam (palace) of the Zamorin. 301 564* [304]

The right nostril of one man was slit vertically as if for insertion of a jewel. His mother miscarried in her first pregnancy, so, according to custom, he, the child of her second pregnancy, had had his nose slit. [304] [845]

Another wore a silver bangle. He had had a wound on his arm which was long in healing, so made a vow to the God at Tirupati (North Arcot District) that, if his arm was healed, he would give up the bangle at the Tirupati temple. He intended to *send* the bangle by a messenger, any one going to Tirupati, when his arm was quite healed: then only would he fulfil his vow. If this illustrates how a vow *may* be fulfilled,—he had not vowed to go *himself* and give the bangle up, only to *give* the bangle which was meanwhile convenient as an ornament,—the man's ideas about the God at Tirupati illustrate the confused ideas as to the personality and attributes of the Gods of Modern Hinduism which obtain in Malabar. He thought it was Baghavati whose shrine was the object of pilgrimage to Tirupati, but was not at all sure; indeed he was not sure whether it was a God or a Goddess. It is scarcely necessary to say that the God at Tirupati is a form of Vishnu. [782] [770] [182]

Other individuals wore ornaments, thus—

(1) Gold ring on ring-finger of the left hand. Earrings with red stone. Amulet against the evil eye. [789]

long key. This individual is throughout *chief* among the 764 offerers of "pindam" (balls of rice) to the deceased. 613

The corpse is laid on the bier, with the head to the south, with the fuel laid over it and a little camphor, sandalwood and ghee, if these things are within the means of the Taravâd. Here must be stated the in- [561] variable rule that no member of the Taravâd, male or female, who is older than the deceased shall take any part whatever in the ceremony, or in any subsequent ceremony following on the cremation or burial. All adult males junior to the deceased should be present when the pyre is lighted. The deceased's younger brother, or, if there is none surviving, his nephew (his sister's eldest son), sets fire to the pyre at the head of the corpse. If the deceased left a son, this son sets fire at the same time to the pyre at the feet of the corpse. In the case of the deceased being a woman, her son sets fire to the pyre; failing a son the next (junior) in age to her has the right to do it. It is a matter of great importance that the whole pyre burns at once: the greatest care is taken that it burns as a whole, consuming every part of the corpse. While the corpse is being consumed, all the members of the deceased's Taravâd who carried it to the pyre go and bathe in a tank (there is always one in the compound or garden around every Nâyar's house): the eldest, he who bears the piece of torn cloth and the piece of iron (the key), carries an earthen pot of water, and all return together to the place of cremation. It should be said that on the news of a death the neighbours assemble, assisting in digging the grave, preparing the pyre, and so on, and, while the members of the Taravâd go and bathe, those remain near the corpse. By the time the relatives return it is almost consumed by the fire, and the senior Anandravan carries the pot of water thrice round the pyre, letting the water leak out by making holes in the pot as he walks round. On completing the third round, he dashes the pot on the ground close by where the head of the dead had been placed. A small image of the [532] deceased is then made out of raw rice * representing the deceased, and to this image a few grains of rice and [782] gingelly seeds are offered. When this has been done the relatives go home and the neighbours depart, bathing [515] before entering their houses.

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* The ceremony is called Veli Unka (?).

765 When the cremation has been done by night, the duty
782 of Sêshakriya (making offerings to the deceased's spirit)
613 must be begun the next day between 10 and 11 A.M. and
is done on seven consecutive days. In any case the time
for this ceremony is after 10 and before 11 and it continues
for seven days. It is performed as follows. All male
members of the Taravâd younger than the deceased go
together to a tank and bathe, *i.e.*, they souse themselves
in the water, and return to the house. The eldest of them,
the man who tore off the strip of cloth from the corpse,
has with him the same strip of cloth and the piece of iron,
and all assemble in the central courtyard of the house,
where there has been placed ready by an Enangan—(one
of the Taravâd—of the same clan or sub-clan as that of
[582] the deceased : marriage must be admissible between the
two Taravâds)—some rice which has been half boiled, a
few grains of gingelly, a few leaves of the cherûla,* some
curds, a smaller measure † of paddy, and a smaller
measure ‡ of raw rice. These are placed in the north-east
corner with a lamp of the ordinary Malabar pattern. A
piece of palmyra leaf, about a foot or so in length and the
width of a finger, is taken, and one end of it knotted; the
knotted end is placed in the ground, and the long end is
left sticking up. This represents the deceased. The rice
824 and other things are offered to this. The belief concerning
826 this piece of palmyra leaf is explained thus: There
764 are in the human body ten humours:—Vâyús; Prânan;
774 Apânan; Samânan; Udânan; Vyânan; Nâgan; Kûrman;
Krikalan; Dêvadattan; Dhananjayan. These are called
Dasavâyu, *i.e.*, ten airs. When cremation was done for
the first time, all these excepting the last, were destroyed
[789] by the fire. The last one flew up and settled on a palmyra
leaf. Its existence was discovered by some Brâhman
sages who, by means of mantrams (magic), forced it down
[782] to a piece of palmyra leaf on the earth. So it is thought
[775] that, by making offerings to this (Dhananjayan) leaf for
seven days, the spirit of the deceased will be mollified,
should he have any anger to vent on the living members
of the Taravâd.

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The place where the piece of leaf is to be fixed has
been cleaned carefully, and the leaf is fixed in the centre
of this prepared surface. The offerings made to it go direct

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* Ærna lanata belonging to the natural order Acanthaceæ.
† Ari Edangâli : about the size of a quart.
‡ A nazhi : about ½ a pint.

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to the spirit of the deceased, and the peace of theTaravâd is ensured. The men who have bathed and returned have brought with them, plucked on their way back to the house, some grass (karuka pullu): they kneel in front of the piece of palmyra, with the right knee on the ground. Some of the grass is spread on the ground near the piece of leaf, and rings made with it are placed on the ring finger of the right hand by each one present. The first offerings consist of water, sandalwood paste and leaves of the cherîla : the eldest of the Anandravans leading the way. Boys need not go through the actual performance of offerings ; it suffices for them to touch the eldest as he is making his offerings. The half-boiled rice is made into balls (pindams) and each one present takes one of these in his right hand and places it on the grass near the piece of palmyra leaf. Some gingelly seeds are put into the curd, which is poured so as to make three rings round the pindams. It is poured out of a small cup made with the leaf on which the half-boiled rice had been placed. It should not be poured from any other kind of vessel. The whole is then covered with this same plantain leaf, some lighted wick is waved, and some milk is put under the leaf. It is undisturbed for some moments, and the leaf is tapped gently with the back of the fingers of the right hand. The leaf is then removed and torn in two at its midrib, one piece being placed on either side of the pindams. The ceremony is then over for the day. The performers rise, and remove the wet clothing they have been wearing.

The eldest of the Anandravans should, it was omitted to mention, be kept somewhat separated from the other Anandravans while in the courtyard, and before the corpse is removed for cremation ; a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law, or some such kind of relation remaining, as it were, between him and them. He has had the piece of cloth torn from the covering of the corpse tied round his waist, and he has had the piece of iron (usually a key) in the folds of his cloth, or stuck in his waist during the ceremony which has just been described. Now, when it has been completed, he ties the piece of cloth to the pillar of the house nearest to the piece of palmyra leaf which has been stuck in the ground, and puts the piece of iron in a safe place. The piece of palmyra leaf is covered with a basket. It is uncovered every day for seven days at the same hour, while the same ceremony is repeated. The balls of rice (pindams) are removed by women and girls of the Taravâd who are junior to the deceased. They

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765 place them in the bell-metal vessel in which the rice was
boiled. The senior places the vessel on her head, and
782 leads the way to a tank, on the banks of which the rice is
613 thrown. It is hoped that crows will come and eat it; for
[775] if they do, the impression is received that the deceased's
spirit is pleased with the offering; but if somehow it is
[825] thought that the crows will not come and eat it, the rice is
[231] thrown into the tank. Dogs are not to be allowed to eat it.
The women bathe after the rice has been thrown away.

765 When the ceremony which has been described has
been performed for the seventh time, *i.e.*, on the seventh day
613 after death, the piece of palmyra leaf is removed from the
574 ground, and thrown on the ashes of the deceased at the
783 place of cremation. During these seven days no member
[824] of the Taravâd goes to any other house. The house of the
dead and all its inmates are under pollution: no outsider
enters it but under ban of pollution, which is, however,
removable by bathing. A visitor entering the house of
the dead during these seven days must bathe before he
can enter his own house. During these seven days the
Kâranavan of the family receives visits of condolence
from relatives and friends to whom he is "at home" on
Monday, Wednesday or Saturday. They sit and chat,
chew betel and go home, bathing ere they enter their
houses.

[184] It is said that in some parts of Malabar the visitors
bring with them small presents in money or kind to help
[431] the Kâranavan through the expenditure to which the
funeral rites necessarily put him.

765 To hark back a little, it must not be omitted that on
the third day after the death, all those who are related by
613 marriage to the Taravâd of the deceased combine and
give a good feast to the inmates of the house and to the
neighbours, who are invited, one man or one woman from
each house. The person so invited is expected to come.
This feast is called Patni Karigi. On the seventh day a
return feast will be given by the Taravâd of the deceased
to all relatives and neighbours.

Between the seventh and fourteenth day after death no
[783] ceremony is observed; but the members of the Taravâd
remain under death pollution, and then on the fourteenth
day comes the Sanchayanam. It is the disposal of the
calcined remains; the ashes of the deceased. The male
members of the Taravâd go to the place of cremation and,
picking up the pieces of unburnt bones which they find
there, place these in an earthen pot which has been
sun-dried—not burnt by fire in the usual way—cover up

All this over

the only thing to be done for the deceased is the annual 769
shraddham, or yearly funeral commemorative rite. Rice
balls (pindams) are made and given to crows. Clapping [825]
of hands announces to these birds that the rice is being
thrown for them, and, should they come at once and eat
it, it is obvious that the spirit of the deceased is pleased
with the offering, and is not likely to be troublesome.
But, on the other hand, should they not come and eat, it
is evident that the spirit is displeased, and the Taravâd
had better look out.

The ceremonial connected with the funeral rites which 771
have been described, illustrates the immense difference
which exists, as it does in the case of all peoples more or
less cultured, between the primitive belief of the race, and
the higher, the more abstract, religion which they believe
they believe. With races, as with children, the earliest
associations are the strongest, and persist through the life
of the race as through the life of the individual. The
higher power of reasoning which comes with higher
development does not disperse them altogether. The 775
people who practise these rites are good Hindus, and,
according to the theory of their Hindu religion, the spirit
which is emancipated from the body at death at once
inhabits another body, for suffering or for enjoyment
measured by the deserts of the bodily existence which
has just ceased. This is the higher religion. And yet
they admit that the spirit is connected with the shadow, [822]
not with the breath;—and feel in their hearts that it still [782]
lingers in the house and absorbs the essence of the
ingredients of the food offered to it; that it must be
propitiated or it will cause harm to the living. This is the
primitive religion. It is supposed that the spirits of those
whose ashes are deposited at Benares or other place of
sanctity, and for whose sake alms are given to Brâhmans,
remain at those holy spots, and become more and more
god-like. This is a mixture of both. We are here
concerned with facts rather than theories and, as much
has been said already of this side of the subject of
comparative religions, we may proceed with our facts.
The spirits of those who have committed suicide or met [766]
death by any violent means are always particularly vicious
and troublesome to the Taravâd, their spirit possessing [613]
and rendering miserable some unfortunate member
of it. Unless pacified they will ruin the Taravâd, so [782]
Brâhman priests are called in and appease them by means
of Tilahômam, a rite in which sacrifical fire is raised, and
ghee, gingelly and other things are offered through it.

683
the Nâyar would be cut down instantly with a sword: 564
there would be no words. Now that the people of India 783
are inconvenienced with an Arms Act which inhibits [656]
sword play of this kind, and with a law-system under
which high and low are rated alike, the Nâyar has to [178]
content himself with an imperious grunt-like shout for
the way to be cleared for him as he stalks on unperturbed. [201]
His arrogance is not diminished, but he cannot now show
it in quite the same way.

Doubtless the natural habit of seclusion common to 771
Malabar, rendered easy by the wealth of vegetation of
which those who have never visited shores somewhat
alike climatically can have no conception, has favoured
the persistence of earlier forms of belief; but, whatever
may be the reason for it, there is much more of the
extremes of religious belief to be seen amongst the
Nâyars than amongst any other people or caste of
Southern India.

It has been noticed already how that the Malayalis [795]
have, practically, no sects such as obtain throughout the
rest of Southern India. Vishnu, Siva, Bhagavati, Rama—
all these names of the Hindu theogony are meaningless
to them. They do not know one from the other except in
name. Their Hinduism is not that of the rest of Southern
India.

It is time to come to concrete example, so I will 796
attempt a description of the ceremonial observed at the [773]
Pishâri kâvu—the Pishâri temple near Quilandy on the
coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where Bhagavati is supposed
in vague legend to have slain an Asura or
gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which event the
festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her followers.
It is fairly representative. The deity of the temple [776]
Bhagavati is spoken of as feminine in the spirit of accuracy,
but it is extremely unlikely whether ten per cent.
of the crowd even thought of sex in connection with
Bhagavati. Sacrifice of goats as part of the ceremonial [782]
was at first denied: it is a mystery too awful to be the
subject of conversation. At the same time, I am inclined
to think that much the weighter reason is that the priests
who cling to this part of the ceremonial are ashamed to
let it be known to the people that they do it. They like
it to be thought that such sacrifice is appropriate to the
inferior races, but that *they* are above it and have nothing
to do with it!

The festival lasts for seven days. When I visited it
in 1895 the last day was on the 31st of March. Before

indirectly, in the matter of giving or not giving new 796
cloths to women after menstruation, but my information 564
on the point is incomplete. Each receives from the
temple daily during the festival a fixed quantity of rice,
and their families are fed. Thus the tailor, the goldsmith, [294]
and the blacksmith, are under obligation to work
as it may be required for the temple without remuneration [326]
in the ordinary way of labour, but for the honour only.

In the afternoon of the same day (the fifth) the Vannân
and a Manûtan, the one following the other and not together,
bring two umbrellas to the temple; Vannân bringing [293]
one of cloth, the other one of cadjan. I am not sure
whether the cloth umbrella has been in possession of the Vannân, but think it has. At all events, when he now brings it to the temple it is in thorough repair, a condition for which he is responsible. The cadjan umbrella is a new one. Following these two as they walk solemnly, each with his umbrella, is a large crowd. There are the usual processions of Bhagavati on the elephant, encircling the temple thrice in the morning, at noon and at night. Nothing more is done on this day.

Early on the sixth day the headman of the Mukkuvans 796
(fisherman), who by virtue of his headship is called the 326
'Arayân,' together with the blacksmith and the goldsmith 226
comes to the temple followed by an interested crowd, 564
but accompanied by no orchestra of drums. To the
Arayân is given half a sack of rice for himself and his followers, a silver umbrella belonging to the temple is handed over to him to be used when he comes to the temple again in the evening. To the blacksmith is given the temple sword. The goldsmith receives the silver umbrella from the Arayân, and excutes on it any repairs that may be needful; and in like manner the blacksmith looks to the sword.

In the afternoon the headman of the Tiyans called 796
the "Tandân," comes to the temple followed by two of 564
his castemen carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders
three bunches of young cocoanuts, an appropriate [782]
offering, the Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession [482]
is climbing the cocoanut palm, drawing the toddy,
securing the cocoanuts, etc. This time there will be loud drumming and a large crowd with the Tandân, and in front of him are men dancing about, imitating sword play with sticks and shields, clanging the shields, pulling at bows as if firing off imaginary arrows, the while
shouting and yelling *madly*. The sticks represent swords. [326]
Then come the blackmith and the goldsmith with the

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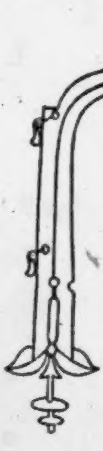
411 called nândakam smeared with white (probably sandalwood) paste. The shape of this sword is given in the illustration. To its edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells, so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle.



796 564 But just before the procession begins there is something for the Tîyans to do. Four men of this caste, having with them Pûkkalasams (flower-kalasams) and five having with them Jannakalasams (?) run along the west, north, and east, sides of the temple (outside the enclosure) shouting and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than anything else. The kalasams contain arrack which [273] is presently given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies. Members of certain families [465] only are allowed to perform in this business, and for what they do each man receives five edangâlis of rice from the temple and a small piece of the flesh of the goat to be [264] sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day during the festival; they do no work, remaining quietly [834] at home unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot [841] cohabit with women; and they cannot see a women in menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tîyans join more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink [782] the arrack in them. These men are always under vow. In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit they have already received from the goddess—cure from 796 sickness as a rule. To the west of the temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tîyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north, three times, holding on the head a pewter plate on which are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each women completes her third round, she stands for a moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the contents of the plate into the

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776 round by south to the westward, and leaving the enclosure proceeds to a certain banyan tree under which is a high raised platform built up with earth and stones. Preced-
796 ing the procession at a distance of 50 yards are the nine
564 men of the Tîyan caste, mentioned already, carrying kalasams on their heads, and a crowd of women of the same caste, each one carrying a pewter plate—*larger* than the plates used when encircling the fire pit—on which are rice, etc., and the burning wick as before. The plate and its contents on this occasion as well as before is called talapôli. I could not make out that anything in particular is done at the banyan tree, and the procession soon returns to the temple, the nine men and the Tîyan women following,
[982] carrying their kalasams and talapôli. On the way, a number of cocks are given in sacrifice by people under a vow. In the procession are a number of "devil dancers" garlanded with white flowers of the pagoda tree mixed with red, jumping, gesticulating, shouting, in an avenue of the crowd in front of the elephant bearing the sword. The person under a vow holds the cock towards one of these "devil dancers" who (never ceasing his gyrations, mad-like gestures and contortions), presently seizes its head, wrings it off, and flings it high in the air.
[755] The vows which are fulfilled by this rude decapitation of cocks have been made in order to bring about cure for some ailment.

The procession passes through the temple yard, the enclosure, from west to east, and proceeds half a mile to a banyan tree under which, like the other, there is a high raised platform. When passing by the temple, the Tîyan women empty the contents of their plates in the fire pit as before, and the nine men hand over the arrack in their kalasams to the temple servants. Let us note here as we go along the curious distribution of this rice which is heaped in the fire pit. Two-thirds of it go to the four Tîyans carrying the Pû (flower) kalasams and one-third to the five who carried the Jannakalasams. Returning to the procession, we find it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy, and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is the measure of rice and the measure of paddy covered with plaintain leaves as before, beside them

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a small lamp or burning wick, and the devil dancer throws 564
a handful towards the house. It then finds its way to the tree to the west under which, on the platform, is now a measure of paddy and a lamp; some Brâhmans* repeat mantrams and the elephant, the priest on his back and the sword in his hand, all three, are supposed to tremble violently. Up to this time the procession has moved leisurely, a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it proceeds at a run to the temple where the priest descends quickly from the elephant and is taken inside the temple by the Mûssad priests. He who has been carrying the sword all this time places it on the sill of the door of the room in which it is kept for worship, and prostrates
before it. The sword then shakes itself for 15 minutes! [778]
until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on it some tirtam, fluid made sacred by having been used for anointing the image of the goddess. This done, the chief amongst the devil dancers will with much internal tumult as well as outward convolutions say, in the way of oracle, whether the Dêvi has been pleased with the festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this oracular utterance he falls in a sort of swoon, and every soul, excepting only the priests and the temple servants,
leaves the place as quickly as possible. The sheds which 796
have been erected for temporary habitation around the 782
temple will be quickly demolished, and search will be
made round about to make sure that no one remains near 564
while the mystic rite of sacrifice is about to be done. When the whole place has been cleared, the four owners of the temple, the senior members of the Taravâds who stand in the position of owners and who, by the way, have stayed, hand over each a goat with a rope tied round its neck to the chief priest; and as soon as they
have done so they too depart. There will remain now [793]
in the temple three Mûssads, one drummer (Marayar)
and two temple servants: no others. These Mûssads are [534]
commonly called Brâhmans though the Nambûtiris do not admit them to be such. The reason for all this secrecy seems to lie in objection to let it be known generally that any sacrifice is done. I was told again and again that there was no such thing. It is a mystic
secret. The Mûssad priests repeat mantrams over the [789]
goats for an hour as a preliminary to the sacrifice. Then [793]

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* East Coast Brahmans (Pattar) I think: perhaps Mûssads.

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564 782 793 the chief priest dons a red silk cloth and takes in his hand a chopper-like sword in shape something like a a small bill-hook—while the goats are taken to a certain room within the temple. This room is rather a passage than a room as there are to it but two walls, running north and south. The goats are made to stand in turn in the middle of this room, facing to the south; the chief priest stand to the east of a goat facing west as he cuts off its head with the chopper. He never ceases his mantrams and the goats never flinch,—the effect of the mantrams! Several cocks are then sacrified in the same place, and over the carcasses of goats and cocks there is sprinkled charcoal powder mixed in water (karutta gurusi) and saffron powder and lime water (chukanna gurusi), the flow of mantrams never ceasing the while. The three Mûssads only see the sacrifice, a part of the rite supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple [534] by the northern door to the north side of the temple; and from this place one of the temple servants, *who is blindfolded*, drags it three times round the temple, the Mûssads following closely repeating their mantrams, the drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers. The drummer dare not look behind him and does not know what is being done. After the third round the drummer and the temple servant go away and the three Mûssads cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice when cooked is taken to the kâvu (grove), to the north of the temple, and there the Mûssads again ply their mantrams. As [533] each mantram is ended a handful of saffron powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer who by this time has returned, the only one present with the priests, keeps up an *obligato pianissimo* with his drum, using his fingers: he faces the north and the priests face the south. Presently, having done with the mantrams, the priests run (*not walk*) once round the temple carrying the cooked rice and scattering it wide as they go, repeating their mantrams. They enter the temple and remain within until day-break. No one can leave the temple until morning comes. Before daybreak the temple is thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Mûssads go out and the five Nambûtiris again enter before sunrise and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day. For this one day only. The next morning the Mûssad priests return and resume their duties.

796 Pishâri Kâvu which represents one of moderate importance
114 and truly one of the people, and its narration
is fairly complete. It seems to express the religion of
the Nâyars as it is when not tacked on to that of the
Brâhmans: as they formulate it of themselves entirely in
their own way.

796 An important local festival is that held near Palghat,
in November, in the little suburb Kalpâti inhabited
184 entirely by Pattar Brâhmans from the east; but it is not
a true Malayali festival and it suffices to mention its
existence for it in no way represents the religion of the
Nâyar. The dragging of cars on which are placed the
images of deities, common everywhere from the temple of
Jagganath, at Pûri in Orrisa, to Cape Comorin, is quite
unknown in Malabar excepting only at Kalpâti which is
close to the eastern frontier of Malabar. The Kalpâti
782 festival is the only "car festival" in Malabar.

[131] Near Chowghât (Chavagât), about 30 miles to the
southward of Calicut, on the backwater, an arm of the
[346] sea and separated from it by a thin strip of land between
the rivers, at a place called Guruvayûr, is a very important
temple the property of the Zamorin, yielding a
very handsome revenue. I visited this festival on one
occasion and saw there much which was of interest but
which must find place in the account of regions of others
[126] than Nâyars. Here purchase was made of a few offerings
such as are made to the temple in satisfaction of
[532] vows. A very rude representation of an infant in silver,
a hand, a leg, an ulcer, a pair of eyes, and, most curious
of all, a silver string which represents a man—the giver.
Symbolization of the offering of self is made by a silver
[326] string as long as the giver is tall! Goldsmiths working
in silver and gold are to be seen just outside the gate of
the temple ready to provide at a moment's notice the
object any person intends to offer, in case he is not
already in possession of his votive offering.

The subject of vows can be touched on but incidentally
here.* A vow is made by one desiring offspring, to have
his hand or leg cured, to have an ulcer cured, to fulfil any
desire whatsoever, and he decides in solemn affirmation to
himself (it is not necessary to go to a temple for the
purpose of vowing) to give a silver image of a child, a silver

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[113] * The subject of vows generally, including description of a Roman Catholic shrine at Cochin somewhat akin to that at Guravayûr, was treated by me in an article which appeared in the 'Calcutta Review' for January 1899.

leg, and so on, in the event of his having fulfilment of his desire. The offering is never an adjunct of the prayers; it is always something done for benefit received. The thing to be noted is that a vow is *always* fulfilled; fulfilled as well as the vower can possibly fulfil it; it is never forgotten or overlooked. 782

> " When the devil was sick the devil a saint would be
> " When the devil was well the devil a saint was he "

is a couplet inapplicable to the Nâyar, or, indeed, to any people in Southern India, where vows, of objects to be given or animals to be sacrified, are treated always with the utmost sacredness even by people who perhaps in no relation of life behave for an hour with common honesty.

A true Malayali festival is that held at Kottiôr, in North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynâd hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the height of the monsoon rain. The average rainfall at Kottiôr in July is probably 60 inches at least, so the devotees generally get a good ducking. Though it is a festival for high and low these do not mix at Kottiôr. The Nâyars go first, and after a few days, the Nâyars having done, the Tîyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days' march; and not only do they abuse to their hearts' content in their exhuberant excitement, but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road. They return like lambs. 796 [132] [564]

I have not been able to ascertain with that definiteness which would enable me to offer more than an opinion, the connection between this violence of language and physical force against innocent people who are met *en route*, and the object of worship at Kottiôr, so will leave that part of the subject alone. The other day I visited the Gangamma festival at sacred Tirupati in North Arcot, and observed, together with conduct the most truly religious vows being carried out with the strongest disregard to personal comfort, the use of language truly filthy and obscene *towards the goddess herself!* "Gangamma! You have a—— (using a filthy word for the vagina) as big as a basket." "She is a whore" said another; and each one in the little crowd of votaries, evidently from the same village, as they approached the shrine, tried to out-do the other in insult and vituperation of the goddess to whom they had 796 782 [778]

796 come to pay their vows for some good done them by her.
782 Obscenities which need not be described were done—these
chiefly by people of very low caste let it be said—by
people who felt that neither gesture in the dance nor
word could be gross enough to express the violence of
their feelings. Yet these people, men and women, rolled,
or were rolled, for they soon become unconscious, many
times round the temple, their arms stretched towards it,
their hair, their clothes (scanty enough) and persons
generally thick with the dust. A piteous sight. And
796 there were to be seen men carrying over their heads an
782 ornamented wooden canopy, the whole (and no light
785 weight) held up, fastened to the person by the ends of the
supports of the canopy, being stuck through the skin of
the back and of the chest. Nothing resting on the
shoulders or held in the hand. I saw a man who, to fulfil
a vow to this goddess who was abused so vilely, had done
this every year for over twenty years, and this year
handed on performance of the painful vow to his son, a
growing lad. The bearers of these canopies danced
continuously as if trying to make the points in their flesh
as hurtful as possible. So that, together with vituperation
of the goddess, there was much veneration, and there is no
hesitation in expressing this through bodily discomfort
and pain.

796 Content for the present with this example from another
part of the Presidency, we will return now to Kottiôr
[346] which I visited in November 1894. One sees a temple of
Isvara, there called Perumâl (or Perumâl Iswara) by the
people; a low thatched building forming a hollow square,
in the centre of which was the shrine which, I was not
[793] permitted to see. There were some Nambûtiri priests who
came out and entered into conversation. Their life far
away in the forest must be a lonely one. The refreshment
which they offered, butter-milk and sugar, was
[578] accepted thankfully. The Nambûtiris, very unsophisticated
persons and much wrapped up in their personal
sanctity, placed the milk and sugar on the ground, and
invited us graciously to partake. A large piece of
cocoanut which they threw to my dog was, strange to say,
eaten greedily by the beast.

796 The festival is not held at the temple but in the forest
778 about quarter of a mile distant. This spot is deemed
extremely sacred and dreadful. There was, however, no
objection to myself and my companion visiting it: we
were simply begged not to go. There were with us a

Nâyar and a Kurichchan, and the faces of these men 796 when we proceeded to wade through the little river, knee-deep 778 and about 30 yards wide, in order to reach the sacred spot of the festival, expressed anxious wonder. They dared not accompany us across. No one (excepting, of course, a Muhammadan) would go near the place unless during the few days of the festival when it is safe: at all other times any man going to the place is destroyed instantly. How much this belief has to do with Íswara need not be commented on! Nothing on earth would have persuaded either the Nâyar or the Kurichchin to cross that river. Orpheus proceeding to find his Eurydice, Dante about to enter the Inferno had not embarked on so fearful a journey! About a hundred yards beyond the stream we came upon the sacred spot, a little glade in the forest. Why this uncomfortable place was chosen I know not; in the rains when the festival is held it is usually under water, and the people have to stand in water. In the centre of the glade is a circle of piled up stones, 12 feet in diameter. In the middle of the pile of stones is a rude lingam. By the same token the lingam had been broken and displaced a few days previously by some Mâppilas searching for treasure which they thought was there. *Running east from the circle of the lingam is a long shed, in the middle of which is a long raised platform of brick, used apparently as a place for cooking. Around the lingam there were also thatched sheds in which the people had lodged during the festival. Grass and weeds were growing high, and the sheds were dilapidated and looking as if they had not been used for years; but then the rain in Malabar brings about destructive effects with astonishing rapidity. [782]

Pilgrims going to this festival carry with them offerings of some kind. Tiyans take young cocoanuts. I am not [783]

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* The circle of stones is specially interesting. Near the Angadipuram-Manjery road, between Vellila and the ferry is a monolith in the centre of a piled up platform circled with stones, the circle 30 feet in diameter. Apparently one of the many pre-Hindu remains in Malabar. Description of the ancient remains in Malabar, which are specially interesting, must be made later on. Just now let me note that stone circles are common. And I find in my notes the following: "On the hill side just about the Tirunelli temple (North Wynâd forests), where there is a clearing in the forest and the ground is somewhat flat, is a circle of stones 12 feet in diameter, and filled up with earth so as to make a raised platform nearly 2 feet in height; in the centre a small upright stone 10 inches high. To the north-east, three flat upright stones . . . . and a flat place, rudely square about 11 feet from the circle, evidently an old sacred place of some of the jungle folk."

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778 sure what the Nâyars take; perhaps the same. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm.

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302 A shrine to which the Malayalis, Nâyars included, resort is that of Subramania in Palni, in the north-west corner of the Madura district, about a week's march from the confines of Malabar near Palghat. Not only are vows paid to this shrine, but men, letting their hair grow for a year after their father's death, proceed to have it cut there. The plate* shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he is carrying is called a kâvadi. There are two kinds of kâvadi: a milk kâvadi (one containing milk in a pot) and a fish kâvadi (one containing fish). The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kâvadi and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the role of beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow; leaves his kâvadi and his hair and a small sum of money.

Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nâyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nâyar as expressed under certain circumstances; for between the Nâyars and these there is in this respect little if any difference. It was at Guruvayûr in November 1895. On a high raised platform under a peepul tree were a number of people under vows, bound for Palni. A boy of 14 had suffered as a child from epilepsy, and seven years ago his father vowed for him (on his behalf) that if he were cured he would make the pilgrimage to Palni. He wore a string of beads round his neck and a like string on his right arm (these were in some way connected with the vow). His head was bent and he sat motionless under his kâvadi, leaning on the bar, which when he carried it rested on his shoulder. He could not go to Palni until it was revealed to him in a dream when he was to start. He had waited for this dream seven years, subsisting on roots (yams, etc.) and milk,—no rice. Now he had had the
776 long-looked-for dream, and he was about to start. As an instance of the Malayali's ignorance of the Hindu theogony, this youth said he was going to the god "Sri Krishnan" in Palni. It is well known that god there is *not* Krishna.

*[See Plate XI, facing p. 230, Category 116 -- Analyst]

Another pilgrim was a man wearing an oval band of 796
silver over the lower portion of the forehead almost covering 788
his eyes; his tongue outside his teeth, kept in position 785
by a silver skewer through it. Had been fasting two years. Much under the influence of the god, and whacking incessantly at a drum in delirious excitement. The skewer was put in the day before, and was to be left in for forty days. Several of the pilgrims wore a handkerchief tied over the mouth, they being under a vow of [982]
silence. One poor man wore the regular instrument of silence, the mouth-lock (a wide silver band over the mouth, the ends reaching over the cheeks, a skewer through both cheeks keeping the ends together * and, of course, the mouth open); and he sat patiently in a nice tent-like affair, about 3 feet high. People fed him with milk, &c., but he made no effort to procure food, relying merely on what was given him.

Pilgrims generally go in crowds under charge of a 796
priestly guide, one who, having made a certain number of 788
journeys to the shrine, wears a peculiar sash and other gear. They call themselves pujâris, and are quite *au fait* with all the ceremonial prior to the journey as well as with the exigencies of the road. As I stood there, one of these pujâris stood up amidst the recumbent crowd. He raised his hands towards the temple a little to the west, then spread out his hands as if invoking a blessing on the people around him. Full of religious fervour he was (apparently at any rate) unconscious of all but the spiritual need of his flock.

The use of the mouth-lock is common with the Nâyars when they assume the pilgrims' robes and set out for Palni, and I have often seen many of them garbed and mouth-locked going off on a pilgrimage to that place.

Brief mention must be made of the festival held at 796
Kodungallûr in the northernmost corner of the Cochin 184
State, along the coast, as it possesses some strange features 788
peculiar to Malabar and is much frequented by the Nâyars. Kodungallûr is near Cranganore, the old Dutch Settlement, where was, probably, the Musiris of the Greeks. Tiruvangaikalam, close by, will probably turn out to be the long lost site of the capital of the Chêra kingdom. I have been disappointed in obtaining particulars

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* The mouth-lock is not peculiar to Malabar. A description of this [171]
form of vow in another part of the Presidency was made by me in the
"Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. II, No. 2 (1890). [113]

796 of the festival, so make the following excerpt from
184 Mr. Logan's well-known "Manual of Malabar." "It takes
788 the people in great crowds from their homes. The whole country near the lines of march rings with the shouts 'Nada-a Nada-a' of the pilgrims to the favourite shrines, chief of which is that at Cranganore (Kodungallûr) in the Native State of Cochin. Of what takes place when the pilgrims reach this spot perhaps the less said the better. In their passage up to the shrine the cry of 'Nada-a Nada-a' (march, march away) is varied by terms of unmeasured abuse levelled at the goddess (a Bhagavati) of the shrine. This abusive language is supposed to be acceptable to her. On arrival at the shrine they desecrate it in every conceivable way, believing that this too is acceptable; they throw stones and filth, howling volleys
[564] of opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman caste, styled *Kûli Muttatta Arayan*, has the privilege of being the first to begin the work of polluting the *Bhoot*
[782] or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary to enter; cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nâyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tîyars and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years." It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans (fisher caste) opens the festival by solemnly making a fœcal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling.

Leaving now the religion, expression of which may be seen at temple festivals and during pilgrimages to these scenes of religious fervour, we will turn to that which we see in the house of the Nâyar at home.

791 Plate XII* shows a man standing with a sword of the shape known as Nândakam. He is an individual called a Velichchappâd, and as he stood to be photographed by me his forehead and face streamed with blood from a self-inflicted wound on the head. The Velichchappâd is a
771 familiar character in Malabar. His profession illustrates the very mixed character of the Hinduism of the Nâyar, partaking as it does of much of the lower cult,—animism,

*[see cat. 116, plate facing p. 242 -- An.]

and deification of ancestors, worship of snakes and kites, 771
ceremonies connected therewith, sacrifice, magic, witch-
craft and sorcery—together with the purest form of Vêdic
Brâhmanism known in Southern India, of which there is
the highest expression in the temples attached to the
wealthy Nambûtiri Illams, to which the Nâyar goes daily
to pray, to purify his mind after having purified his body
by bathing. There is very little to be seen of prayer in 771
Southern India outside Malabar. The great mass of the 171
people (I exclude the Brâhmans, a very minute percentage
of the whole) never dream of going to a temple daily to 782
pray; in fact prayer for its own sake scarcely exists.
People go in crowds to a temple on the occasion of a
festival to make obeisance to the god, and in a vague way
to pray, or they will go to fulfil a vow; but going merely
to pray by way of self purification of spirit is certainly
rare, for this denotes a phase of religion to which the
great mass of the people of Southern India has not
reached.

Far away in, as it may be said, rural Malabar, I wit- 796
nessed the ceremony in which the Velichchappâd exhibi-
ted his quality. It was in the courtyard of a Nâyar house,
to which thronged all the neighbours (Nâyars), men and
pretty women, boys and girls. The ceremony lasts about
an hour. The Nâyar said it was the custom in his family
to have it done once a year, but could give no account of
how the custom had originated: most probably in a vow;
some ancestor having vowed that if such or such benefit
be received, he will for ever after have an annual perform-
ance of this ceremony in his house. It involved some [465]
expenditure, as the Velichchappâd had to be paid, and
the neighbours had to be fed. Somewhere about the [357]
middle of the little courtyard, always as clean as a [354]
dinner table, the Velichchappâd placed a lamp (of the
Malabar pattern) having a lighted wick, a kalasam, which
he had prepared, some flowers, camphor, saffron and other
paraphernalia. Bhagavati was the deity invoked, and the
business involved offering flowers, and waving a lighted
wick around the kalasam. The Velichchappâd's move- 787
ments became quicker, and suddenly seizing the sword 796
he ran round the courtyard (*against* the sun, as the sailors
say) shouting wildly. He is under the influence of the
deity who has been induced into him, and he gives
oracular utterance to the deity's commands. What he
said I know not, and no one else seemed to know or care
in the least, much interested though they were in the

787 performance. As he ran, every now and then he cut his
796 forehead with the strange misshapen sword, pressing it
[785] against the skin and sawing (vertically) up and down.
The blood streamed all over his face. Presently he became wilder and wilder, and whizzed round the lamp, bending forward towards the kalasam. Evidently some deity, some spirit, was present here, and spoke through the mouth of the Velichchappâd. This, I think, undoubtedly represents the belief of all who were present. When he had done whizzing round the kalasam, he soon became a normal being and stood before my camera.
[465] The fee for this self-inflicted laceration is one rupee and some odds and ends of rice, etc. I saw the Velich-
791 chappâd about three days afterwards going to perform
796 elsewhere. The wound on his forehead had healed! The careful observer can always identify a Velichchappâd by the triangular-like patch over the forehead where the hair will not grow, and where the skin is somewhat indurated. The Velichchappâds seem to get used to cutting their foreheads as the eels to skinning.

We shall find the oracle again when we come to the lower races. I have seen a fine demonstration of it amongst the Paniyans of Wynâd when engaged in a regular corrobboree. An extremely interesting example of this combination of this phase of the lower Dravidian cult which is in no way Hindu, with the Brâhmanic religion, is to be seen at Mailâr in the Bellary district. There the oracle is bound up with a story about Rishis and Asuras, an incarnation of Siva and Pârvati, and many thousands assemble yearly to hear the oracle delivered by a man on the top of a huge affair representing Siva's bow, speaking the words of the god.

769 Before concluding the subject of religion, allusion must be made to the worship of ancestors. Cremation of
782 the dead, as in the case of the Nambûtiris, is done in the garden or compound surrounding the Taravâd house, in the south or south-west corner of it; so the Nâyar has the ashes and spirits of his ancestors with him always. We have seen already how that pacification of the spirits of those who have passed from view, and who are in the land of the shades, pervade the lives of the living. They are worshipped every new moon day, but especially on the new moon of Karkitakam,* of Tulâm and of Kumbham

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[113] * The names of the Malayali months have been given already—see Nambûtiris (Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 2).

months. The last is the day following Siva râtri, the well- 769
known Hindu festival. As it was told to me "Food is 782
offered to the ghosts" on these occasions; to all ancestors,
male and female. Food of any kind except cooked rice is
offered.* It is cooked and placed in the middle room on the [552]
west side of the house, where are kept small images in gold
or silver of the senior members of the Taravâd (in poorer houses, a stone simply is put to represent the deceased), and the door will be shut for about ten minutes, after which the food will be removed and eaten by the house people. Special worship of ancestors is often made at the temples specially sacred, on the new moons which have been specified, especially on the last. The plate depicts the crowd in the bed of the Ponnâni river on the day following Siva râtri. Men and women bathed and put on clean cloths and, when they had done so put a little burning camphor, sandalwood powder and some other little accessories, on a leaf which was floated down the river after a brief prayer. The scene of the picture adjoins the temple at Tirunavâyi, supposed to be the oldest in Malabar.

SERPENT WORSHIP.

Description, such as is here attempted, of the Nâyar's 771
religion is incomplete so far. There remains to say some- 776
thing of serpent worship and to make some allusion to
common superstitions. For description of these I would [114]
refer the interested reader to a capital little book entitled "Malabar and its Folk" published by Messrs. Natesan & Co., Madras, by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panniker, B.A., himself a Nâyar as his name denotes. With this gentleman's permission I will reproduce here chapter 12 of his book entitled "Serpent Worship in Malabar":—

"Malabar is a country which preserves to this day primitive 776
institutions of a type peculiarly fascinating to the ethnologist. Of the various kinds of primitive worship still practised in the country that of the serpent occupies a prominent place. Here the serpent is deified and offerings of pooja are often made to the reptile. It has got a powerful hold upon the popular imagination. Each household has got its own serpent deity possessing large powers for good as well as for evil. A separate spot is set
apart in the house-compound as the abode of these deities. This [778]
reserved spot is converted into a small jungle almost circular in

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* Bread made of rice flour may be offered.

776 shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs,
778 and sometimes medicinal plants also. In the middle of this quasi-circular shrine images usually made of laterite after specified shapes are arranged in certain established methods and a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside. This spot is so scrupulously reserved, that not even domestic animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting down of the tree, is
[564] regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of
[793] a low-caste man. Once in every year at least poojah offerings are made to these gods through the medium of the Numbûdri
[782] priests.

" Periodical ceremonies called Pāmbantullel are performed to
796 propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions
776 for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family.
782 The ceremony is a long complicated process. Any individual drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the poojahs
[532] incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures. The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours, red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts, eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others.
[533] These are properly arranged in the place and poojah is offered by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*, and some holy songs or ballads in memory of these gods. Then a number of Nair women, with perfect purity and cleanliness of person are seated close to each other in a row or two. These women are to preserve sanctity and purity of their persons by a total abstinence from animal food, intoxicants and anything else of an exciting nature for a prescribed period of time; and it is only after the lapse of this period that they become worthy of being admitted to

this ceremony. Thus having purged their bodies of all worldliness 796
they are taken into the ceremony and are seated as described 776
before. Now by means of the *mantrams* and poojah the serpent 782
gods are propitiated and in consequence they manifest themselves [787]
in the bodies of these female representatives of theirs. The
entrance of the gods into their bodies is characterised by a fearful 796
concussion of their whole frame, gradually developing into a 776
ceaseless, shaking, particularly the upper parts. A few minutes 782
afterwards, they begin to speak one by one and their speeches are 787
regarded as expressions of the god's will. Sometimes the gods
appear in the bodies of all these females and sometimes only in
those of a select few or none at all. The refusal of the gods to
enter into such persons is symbolical of some want of cleanliness
and purity in them; which contingency is looked upon as a
source of anxiety to the individual. It may also suggest the
displeasure of these gods towards the family in respect of which
the ceremony is performed. In either case, such refusal on the
part of the gods is an index of their ill-will or dissatisfaction.
In cases where the gods refuse to appear in any one of those seated
for the purpose, the ceremony is prolonged until the gods are so
properly propitiated as to constrain them to manifest themselves.
Then after the lapse of the number of days fixed for the ceremony
and after the will of the serpent gods is duly expressed the
ceremonies close.

"One other small item of offering to these gods consists in 776
certain ballads sung by the Pulluvar females going about from 533
house to house at stated seasons of the year. They take a pretty 534
large pitcher, close its opening by means of a small circular piece
of thin leather which is fastened on to the vessel by means of 782
strings strongly tied round its neck. Another string is adjusted
to the leather cover which when played on by means of the fingers,
produces a hoarse note which is said to please the god's ears,
pacify their anger and lull them into sleep. This vessel is carried
from house to house in the day time by these Pulluvar females;
and placing the vessel in a particular position on the ground,
and sitting in a particular fashion in relation to the vessel, they
play on the string which then produces a very pleasing musical
note. Then they sing ballads to the accompaniment of these
notes. After continuing this for sometime they stop, and getting
their customary dues from the family, go their own way. It is
believed that these notes and the ballads are peculiarly pleasing to
the serpent gods, who bless those for whose sakes the music has
been rendered. In consequence of the halo of sanctity that has
been popularly thrown round the serpent it is considered a sin of 766
a most heinous nature to kill one of these deified reptiles. The 776
killing of a cobra is regarded with the utmost concern amongst 825
us. In such case the carcase is taken and duly burned with all [783]

776 the necessary solemn ceremonials. Sandalwood is the fuel used
788 sometimes. A small pit is dug which is covered with sandalwood
825 pieces and they are set fire to. When the flame burns intensely the body is quietly placed in it, and reduced to ashes together with, in some cases, incense and myrrh. This is believed to mitigate the dangers consequent on the death of the serpent.

776 "The popular conception of the family cobra is that it is a
825 tiny little thing with a full developed hood, and fangs, and possessing a golden tinge; which shine brilliantly in the rays of the sun. At the sight of human beings it gets away to its holy shrine exhibiting a reeling motion on its way thither. It never gets far away from its abode of which it is the perennial guardian.

567 "One striking phase of serpent worship in Malabar relates to the family of Pappanmakkat Nambudris and the singular
776 and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. Their
825 powers are handed from father to son. It is said that this Nambudri household is full of cobras which find their abode in every nook and corner of it. The inmates can scarcely move about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents. Owing to the magic influence of the family the serpents cannot and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at the beck and call of the members of this Nambudri family and render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit. In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural powers.

[755] "Cases of cobra-poison are generally taken to this Brahman family and the headman sometimes summons before him the identical animal which caused injury and it is said successfully effects a cure as if by some mystic and magic influence.

825 "The serpent also plays a conspicuous part in contracts between citizens. The family serpent is in old deeds the
426 subject-matter of sale. The sale of a house compound extends
776 also to the family serpent. The stipulation in these documents invariably is that the family serpents are sold along with the properties; and even in cases of division of family property amongst its several branches of members, the family-serpent is included in the division. Such is the sacred prominence which has been given to the serpent amongst us. Their anger
[753] is said to manifest itself in some member of the family being
[982] struck down with leprosy or some other loathsome disease; while by their propitiation they can be converted into the guardian angels of our households, powerful enough to preserve the prosperity of the inmates as well as to vouchsafe their complete immunity from the attacks of virulent diseases and sometimes even from death."

As the subject of serpent-worship is one of fascina- 776
ting interest, I will add to the preceding extract, which 778
is as interesting as it is accurate, an excerpt from the [127]
"Report of the Census of Travancore" for 1891 (the
Malayalam year 1066), a book which is perhaps not accessible to many. The shrine which is described therein is in the neighbouring Native State of Travancore, but it is equally representative of one in Malabar:—

"A serpent-kavoo in Travancore. Many places of Hindu worship exist in Travancore under groves locally known as kavoos. There are thousands of these in the country. Lieutenants Ward and Conner estimated their number at 15,000 seventy years ago. This number has, I think, increased since then. These kavoos are all dedicated to minor divinities such as Nàgathans, Nàgarajas, Yekshis, Gandharvas, and Sàstas. Some are of great age and repute and own enormous properties for their maintenance. One of these a well-known sarpa-kavoo in a village 70 miles north of Travancore will be here described. Mythological origin for these sarpa-kavoos is thus stated in the Kéralòlpatti. When Parasuràma's first colonists found Kérala uninhabitable and unimprovable, they abandoned it and returned to their old country. During the time of their absence the Nàgas (serpents) of the lower world, called in popular language Nàgalòkam or Pàtàla, took possession of the newly-reclaimed land and settled there. The colonists returning found that the serpents had usurped their lands, upon which a fight ensued, and Parasuràma arbitrated between his colonists and the Nàgas, wih the result that these latter were to be given a corner of every occupied compound. Thus arose the sarpa kavoos of Malabar which, as I have already described in a previous chapter, is generally at the south-west corner of every Tarvâd garden. And Parasuràma further ordained that the places allotted to the Nàgas were to be left untouched by the knife or the spade, thus enabling the underwood trees and creepers to grow luxuriantly therein. It is to such places that the name of kavoo (or grove) is given. In the kavoo are generally planted several idols of serpents on a stone basement called chittrakoodam, and sometimes a low wall is thrown round to prevent cattle or children
trespassing into that space. The propitiation of the [782]
serpents is deemed essential for the well-being and prosperity of the householder. Offerings of noorum palum (dough and milk) of cooked rice, lights and songs are

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778 made periodically to the serpent gods in the kavoos. The one I am describing here is one of the most important in Travancore. This is known as Mannārsāla.
173 Once upon a time, so says tradition, a male member of this Illam married a girl of the Vettikkòttu Illam, where
776 the serpents were held in great veneration. The girl's
778 parents being poor could give her nothing in the way of
[illegible] dowry. They, therefore, gave her one of the stone idols of the serpent, of which there were many in their house. This stone idol the girl was counselled to take care of and regularly worship; subsequently it is said the girl became a mother and brought forth a boy and a snake, whereupon the snake-child was located in the underground cellar of the house and brought up. The Illam prospered from that day. The woman and the snake are believed to be the cause of the affluence of the family, and to this day ~~to~~ the surname of the male members of that Illom are added, by way of distinction, the names of the serpent god and that of the female.
115 Thus my informant, the present head of the family, is called Vasaki Sridévi Krishnan Nambyadi. To this gentleman I am indebted for the following further details on the snake-worship at Mannārsāla :—He says the name Mannārsāla means the 'unburnt ground.' This refers to an ancient tradition that when the great Khandavavanam was burnt by Agni, the god of fire, this small oasis was spared on the prayer of the serpents, who were the progeny of the serpent offspring of the lady of this Illam. As the Illam could not well accommodate the large number of the serpents that had multiplied, they were removed to a spot on the south of the house, where a magnificent grove has since been grown. In this spot are stone idols put up for the king and queen of snakes known as Nágarája and Nágayekshi, and for various members of the family which, according to my informant, number about 3,000. There are as many stone
778 images in this grove now. In the cellar of the house, as well as in the grove where the stone images are placed,
776 a solution of noorum palum is offered once a year, that
782 is, on the day following the Sivarátri in the month of Mási. The same kind of offering is made to the Chittrakoodom also. About 12½ Edangalies of dough and milk are mixed together and kept in the cellar. Thereafter the door of the cellar is shut for three days, and lest anybody pry into what passes within the cellar, the women of the household cover the crevices and holes of the door

by the big cadjan umbrellas of the female inmates of the 778
Illam. On the third day the door is opened, and whatever 776
remains in the vessel of the dough and milk placed there 782
is thrown into a tank as unfit for human use. The
mixing up of noorum palum and the performing of the
poojahs are done by the eldest female member of the
Illam. The noorum palum is made of rice-flour, saffron
powder, cow's milk, water of the tender cocoanut, fruit of
the Kadali plantain, and ghee. In the Nálukettu of the
house, offerings of noorum palum and cooked rice, as
well as kuruthi (a red liquid composed of flour, saffron
and chunam), take place every Ayilyam (star) day.
Every morning the king and queen of serpents are
washed, and an offering of fruit and milk is made to
them; in the noon offerings of Vellanivedyam (cooked
rice) and afterwards of fried grain (malar) follow. During
the month of Kartika, a special poojah called navakom
and offering of noorum palum are daily observed. On
the Sivarátri day, in the month of Mási, the customary
five poojahs and navakom are performed, and in the
evening of the same day sacrificial offerings to the serpents
and kuruti, as stated above, are made, and at the
conclusion of the day's poojahs the idols are taken in
procession round the temple. On Ayilyam (star) days, 796
in the months of Purattási and Alpasi, all the serpent
idols in the grove and the temples therein are taken in 776
procession to the Illam, and offerings of noorum palum, 776
kuruti and cooked rice are made there in propitiation of 782
the serpent gods. The person who carries the idol of the
Nágarája is the eldest female member of the Illam, and
the procession is conducted with great pomp and rejoicings.
According to my informant, the eldest female
member of the house, though married, is expected to lead
a celibate life when she becomes the oldest female in the
family. During the festive days at Mannārsāla, about
5,000 people assemble to worship and propitiate the
serpent gods, and their offerings include gold and silver
coins, and gold, silver, copper or stone effigies of snakes,
grains of all kinds, pepper, salt, saffron, tender cocoanuts,
bunches of Kadali plantain, melons, oil, ghee, sandalwood,
silk and other pilgrims. On the day previous to
the Ayilyam ceremonial, about two or three thousand
Brahmans are fed. The annual expense of this institution [435]
and worship at Mannārsāla is estimated at about
2,000 rupees. The kâvu has its own paddy fields and [423]
gardens, from the revenues of which it is maintained.

family to compass the death of a member of the slayer's family. 627
This custom was called *kudippaka* (literally, *house feud*), or in an
abbreviated form, *kuduppu*. One curious fact connected with 627
this custom was that the chieftain of the district intervened 634
when a man was slain, and the body of the deceased was by
him taken to his enemy's house, and the corpse and the house
were burnt together. It is understood that an out-house was
usually selected for this purpose, but it was a common phrase
to say,—

'the slain rests in the yard of the slayer.'

"Again when mortal offence was given by one man to 627
another, a solemn contract used to be entered into before the 634
chieftain of the locality to fight a *duel*, the chieftain himself 578
being the umpire. Large sums (up to a thousand fanams or [525]
two hundred and fifty rupees) used to be deposited as the battle-
wager, and these sums formed one source (*ankdm*) of the chief- [652]
tain's revenue, and the right to levy them was sometimes
transferred along with other privileges appertaining to the
tenure of the soil. A preparation and training (it is said) for
twelve years preceded the battle in order to qualify the combatants in the use of their weapons. The men who fought
were not necessarily the principals in the quarrel—they were
generally their champions. It was essential that one should
fall, and so both men settled all their worldly affair before the
day of combat."

The origin of the duo-decimal period is obscure, but 423
to this day it obtains in Malabar (and in Malabar only)
in relation to all agricultural affairs. The land, in 427
contradistinction to the rest of the Presidency (as a rule),
is the absolute property of the landholders—the whole
of Malabar is; the landholders let out their land under
certain conditions for periods of twelve years. This is [178]
the ordinary period of tenure; now a days, much of the
land is leased informally on a yearly tenure. Tenants
must renew their right to possession of their land every
twelve years. The subject of land tenure in Malabar is [821]
a very extensive one, and we will not discuss it, resting
satisfied with having noted the observance of the twelve
yearly cycle in connection with it. It is supposed to be
governed by the cycle of Jupiter.*

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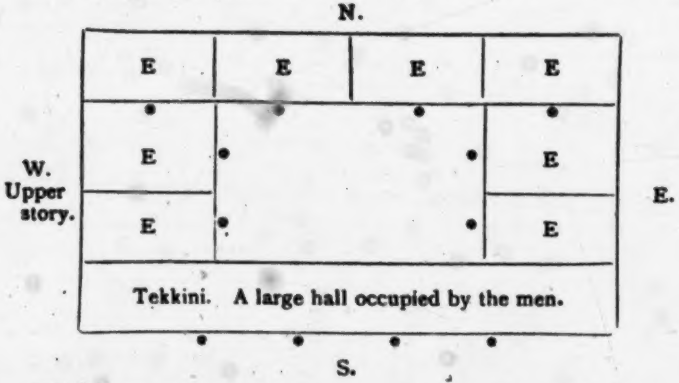
* Friar Jordanus, Bishop of Quilon in the 14th century, said that [782]
people make a vow, and to fulfil it cut off their own head before an idol.
"Barbosa says that the king of Quilaene or Coliacaud (Calicut) . . . [762]
after reigning 12 years, always sacrificed himself to an idol in this way."—
"Madras Manual of Administration," vol. iii, page 643.

342
556 occupied by the male members. There is no connection between the portions allotted to the men and that of the
[769] women. No. 8 is for the family gods. The Kârnavans
[778] and old women of the family are perpetuated in images of gold or silver, or, more commonly, brass. Poor people,
[735] who cannot afford to make these images, substitute simply a stone. Offerings are made to these images (or
[782] to the stones) at every full moon. The throat of a fowl will be cut outside, and the bird is then taken inside and offered.

The entrance is at C.



Windows at • • • •

E. Rooms occupied by women and children.

It may be noticed that the apartment, where the men sleep, has no windows on the side of the house which is occupied by the women. The latter are relatively free from control by the men as to who may visit them. We saw, when speaking of funeral ceremonies, that a house was supposed to have a central courtyard; and of course it has this only when there are four sides to the house. The nâlupura, or four-sided house, is the proper one for in this alone can all ceremonial be observed in orthodox fashion. But it is not the ordinary Nâyar's house that

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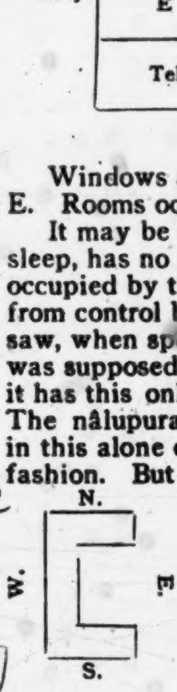

[351]

one sees all over Malabar. The ordinary house is, roughly, of the shape here indicated. Invariably there is an upper story. There are no doors but only a few tiny windows opening to the west. Men sleep in one end, women in the other, each having their own staircase. Around the house there is always shade from many trees and palms. Every house is in its own seclusion.

789
[791] The Panikkars dabble also in magic. In Plates XVI, XVII are figured four yantrams, selected from a number in my possession as representative, presented to me by a Panikkar. They should be written on a thin gold, silver or copper plate (a yantram written on gold is the most effective), and worn on the person. As a rule, the yantram is placed in a little cylindrical case made of silver, fastened to a string tied round the waist. Many of these are often worn by the same person. The yantram is sometimes written on cadjan or paper. I have one of this kind in my collection taken from the neck of a goat. It is common to see them worn on the arm, or round the neck.

No. I. Aksharamâla.—Fifty-one letters. Used in connection with every other yantram. Each letter has its own meaning, and does not represent any word. In itself this yantram is powerless; but it gives life to all others. It must be written on the same plate as the other yantram.

[782] *No. II. Sûlini.*—For protection against sorcery, or devils. This is to invoke the goddess and secure her aid. The ceremony brings a blessing to the receiver of the charm.

[776] *No. III. Mâha Sûlini.*—To be used to prevent all kinds of harm through devils, chief of whom is Pulatini—he who eats infants. May be used also as protective against enemies. Women wear it to avert miscarriage. The letter in the middle, Hûm Mâha Sûlini. That in the rim is Om.

[782] *No. IV. Kâla Bhâiravi.*—Represents the goddess. The goddess must be pleased *first* by worship. No sacrifice, which is rather odd, as this terrible goddess is generally represented in Southern India as loving blood. The letters do not form any mantram. Each letter has life in itself. Prevents all harm from enemies, and attack by devils.

Other yantrams to be used in much the same way as these are:—

[illegible] The *Ganapati* yantram. To increase knowledge. To put away fear and shyness.

The *Sarasvati* yantram. To enable its possessor to please his listeners, and increase his knowledge.

[776] The *Panchakshari* yantram, a square containing 81 smaller squares, in each a mystic letter; the whole representing Siva. For persons on whom medicines have no effect. Also against evil spirits. A person out of whom an evil spirit has been driven is perfectly safe ever after with this carried on his person.

789 791 magician was called in to prepare one of these. Placing an ordinary style and a small sheet of copper in a box, he closed it. Presently a noise was heard inside the box; and in a few moments a sound as of the style falling. The box was opened and magic figures were found to be inscribed on the copper sheet. The lady wears the talisman now! The magician must have been in a favourable mood on the occasion, as he is said to have given an additional performance on his own account. When he had placed the style and the tiny sheet of copper in the box, taking two young cocoanuts in his hands, he kept on throwing them in the air and catching them. "What will you have in each?" he asked. "Honey in one and boiled milk in the other" was the answer. Of course these were found in the cocoanuts when they were opened by the magician, but it was somewhat gross of the Nâyar gentleman to test the quality of the milk by turning it into curds the next [493] day. Wonderful stories are told of this man who used to be seen at night carried in a mancheel by invisible bearers, whose weary chant could be heard, but whose bodily presence was beyond the reach of human eye.

791 The last and the chief of this trio is the once famous Kandeth Nayar who departed this life about a hundred [782] years ago. Every one knows about the Kandeth Nayar, and any one now-a-days who wants to injure another invokes his aid, and resorts to his tomb to fulfil his vow. I understand that sacrifices at his tomb are common, and that his power reaches from the land of shades in almost the same strength as when he lived.

791 754 The rather incoherent way in which the terms warlock, magician, have been used seems to demand some explanation. Strictly speaking, the Parayan Ôḍiyan is the only warlock. Magician is scarcely the correct term for the ordinary worker in magic. Nevertheless, it is scarcely possible to avoid a somewhat indiscriminate use of these terms on account of the way in which the functions of the warlock, the magician, the astrologer, and even the priest are really interwoven one with the other. The professed magician is often also the warlock and *vice versâ*. The vernacular word, which is as catholic as that which stands for "Religion," is "mantravâḍi"—mantram man; he who is sought every day of the year by hundreds of the people of Kêrala, to relieve them of their physical troubles and infirmities, to cure their cattle, to injure their enemies, aye, even to destroy them.

much the same part as did its maternal and affinal kinsmen to a patrilineal lineage in the 613
lower castes. Individual *enangar* were moreover often of course affines (*bandhus*) to members
of the lineage. But among Nayars, the marriage-tie was so slender that individual affinal
bonds were not, it seems, strong enough to unite the lineage to the rest of the sub-caste group. [581]
This was achieved instead by a hereditary relationship between lineages as groups, which
persisted irrespective of the making and breaking of marriage ties between them.

In these retainer sub-caste groups the *tāli* must be tied by an *enangan*. Each girl had a 588
separate bridegroom, usually a youth who might have already formed *sambandham* relationships
of his own. The *tāli*-tiers were chosen at a local assembly. The choice was made by the village 613
astrologer, who compared the horoscopes of the girls with those of suitable young men and 564
fixed the auspicious date and time for the ceremony to take place.

In Kiriyattil, Samantan, and royal lineages, whose women frequently or invariably [787]
married men of higher sub-caste, the *tāli*-tier was chosen from the appropriate higher sub-caste. Women of village headmen's lineages were commonly 'tied' by men of their district
headman's lineage, and Sāmantan women and Cochin princesses by Nambūdiri Brahmans.
Calicut princesses had the *tāli* tied by men of Kodungalur, one of the ancient ruling lineages
which had been conquered by Calicut. Similarly, Walluvanād princesses had the *tāli* tied by
men of the lineage of Beypore, a more ancient and therefore higher-ranking lineage than their
own of an adjacent small kingdom which was also feudatory to Calicut. In these sub-castes
the 'bridegroom' was usually an elderly man.

The account which follows was given by Sūdra Nayars of Pālakkara, the Cochin village 121
where I worked. In Pālakkara, the *tāli*-rite in its full form has not been performed for twenty- 588
two years, and, like many of the traditional rites of Nayars, it is doubtful if it will ever be [115]
performed again. This description refers to this most recently held ceremony, at which the
tālis were tied for nineteen girls, ranging in age from two to twelve, of a lineage comprising [114]
twelve property-groups.

The ceremony required the co-operation of the whole village, which at that time was [178]
coterminous with the *tara*. It was held in the lineage's oldest ancestral house. A shed of bamboo
and palm-fronds was erected before the house, the first corner-post, of areca-palm wood, 588
being planted ceremonially by the carpenter. A man of the temple-servant caste of Kurups 346
drew a picture of the Malabar goddess Bhagavadi on the floor of the shed, of the type drawn
in the village Bhagavadi temple at festivals to the goddess. Nayar men of the village then 621
went and cut down a branch of the milk-exuding tree of Bhagavadi from near the village 532
temple. This they planted near the corner-post in the floor of the shed, in order, informants
said, 'to bring Bhagavadi to the *taravād* and set up a temple in the house'. A plank of wood 564
of the same tree was set in the shed for each girl to sit on in turn.

All *enangar* of the lineage, and representatives of every other Nayar house in the village, 588
attended the four days of ceremonies. On the first morning, the girls went in procession to
the shrine of the lineage's *dharma devi* (goddess of moral law). This goddess, represented by a 613
stone image, is the lineage's private Bhagavadi. She is propitiated annually with cooked food
to ward off sickness and misfortune. Similar offerings were made now, and the procession [776]
returned. Young men of the lineage then went to meet the bridegrooms, who arrived on
elephants with their male age-mates, accompanied by music. At the gate married women of [782]
the lineage met them carrying brass plates each containing a lit wick, paddy, rice, and a spray
of coconut flowers. The bridegrooms' feet were washed by brothers of the girls and they were 588
seated in the marriage-shed. Near the picture of Bhagavadi were laid paddy and rice, coconut flowers, the sacred brass lamp of the household, and a tray of eight auspicious objects
(*ashtamangalyam*). These included a woman's loin-cloth, a rouge-box, a bell-metal mirror,
an arrow, a coconut-spray, rice, paddy and a lit wick; they figure also in the Nambūdiri

Nayar

588

marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house
[564] and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brâhman priest (called Elayad,
[793] a low sub-caste of Nambûdiris who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tâli* to the bridegroom,
who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house
588 for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times
833 when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabitation
would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been
178 required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defloration ceremony, as is
indicated by the saying *Tâli kettiu amma âyi* ('having had the *tâli* tied, a girl becomes a
[married] woman').

588 Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi
took place. The participants were a Sûdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappâd*), a Vattekad (oil-monger)
782 Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to
the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by
787 hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy,
coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following
793 which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then
donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the
power of Bhagavadi: when he dons them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.)
Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping
his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host
kâranavan that the goddess was appeased by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his
insignia were removed.

776 Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar
village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol
[831] of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's
sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the
[753] ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She
is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar
[782] rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last
night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must
[834] observe sexual continence.

The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music.
588 On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand,
they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the lineage
[783] house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then
fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received
[264] clothing and foodstuffs from the *kâranavan* and departed for their respective homes.

In Pâlakkara the *tâli*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At
588 the last *tâli*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides,
184 though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with
other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tâli*-rites in this area, however, the 'bride-groom'
remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never
595 visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological
[765] father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally
observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover
[783] and the physiological father. The *tâli*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual
father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word
[851] for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *acchan* (originally

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588 coconut in half, returned amid music, and entered the middle room. The barber woman dressed her and threw rice on her head.

[604] The girl's mother's brother's wife then carried a plank of the milk tree into the marriage shed, walked round with it three times, and placed it on a mat over rice and paddy. The Tandan of the local group must be present to witness the rites. The mother's brother's wife [782] and other women, or in some areas the *kāranavan*, led out the girl who, with her face hidden by a cloth, walked three times round and sat on the plank. The barber man instructed her to perform an offering of rice and water to the household lamp and the post supporting the south-east corner of the shed, which had previously been set up by the carpenter with ceremonies at an auspicious time. The girl threw more rice to the cardinal points, the earth, and the sky. Gold and silver coins, salt, rice, paddy, turmeric, charcoal, and pieces of old cadjan leaf from the house-thatch were then tied separately in leaves and placed in a mud pot. The mouth of [787] the pot was covered with a leaf and tied with string. The girl sprinkled rice over the pot, broke a hole in the lid, and picked out one of the articles, which was examined as an augur of her destiny and of the number of children she would bear. She then twisted off a coconut from a bunch hanging at the corner of the shed. Each of her relatives threw a new cloth over her head. Half of the cloths were given to the barber, who at this point uncovered the girl's face and head and poured coconut water from a leaf of the pipal tree on to a silver and a copper coin which he had placed upon her head. Her *kāranavan* asked the astrologer if the auspicious time had arrived, after which the barber woman handed the *tāli* to the mother's brother's wife who tied it round the girl's neck. The barber woman poured water on the girl's hands: this she threw upwards three times and once each to the cardinal points. A lit cotton wick, steeped in oil, was twisted round a rod of bamboo stuck in a young coconut. The girl was required to look at the sun and at this wick. She then walked three times round a coconut tree in the garden, pouring water at its root. This concluded the ceremonies. Unfortunately, I have no record of whether the girl was further secluded after the rites were over.

[604] Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, I, p. 288) reports that the *tāli* was tied 'either by the maternal or paternal aunt or by the would-be mother-in-law, if the husband for her has [582] already been selected'. All of these kinswomen (mother's brother's wife, father's sister and husband's mother) are real or potential mothers-in-law because of cross-cousin marriage. My own informants and also Aiyappan state that the rite included an initiation into cookery: the girl was made to grind condiments on a grindstone and to pretend to cook milk porridge before the *tāli* was tied. Aiyappan reports that the barber woman instructed her, and at the end said: 'Prepare sweet porridge, give it to father and mother, and to me, and keep what remains in the *uri*' (a rope support to keep vessels suspended).

This initiation rite, while, like the Nayar one, symbolizing the girl's attainment of maturity and her passage to the status of a married woman, is adapted to the occupation and kinship of Tiyyars. It is significant that to attain 'wifehood' a Tiyyar girl must grind condiments and make porridge – a foreshadowing of her domestic duties as wife.

588 The mother's brother's wife and the father's sister are preferred mothers-in-law for a Tiyyar girl. The fact that either could be replaced by the actual prospective mother-in-law 582 if the girl were already betrothed proves that they acted in the rite as potential mothers-in-law. The mother's brother's wife is of course suited to become a girl's mother-in-law in a matrilineal system which recognizes strong paternal claims (see Fortes 1953, p. 200). Marriage of her son to her husband's niece mitigates the proverbial conflict between cross-cousins, while 58 cementing the relationship between father and son who frequently live together and co-605 operate in cultivation. The father's sister's claim is equally strong. In this marriage the boy commonly returns to his mother's brother in his natal house, the girl remaining in her paternal [593] house where she has been brought up. The matrilineal cross-cousin marriage of a man is

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[South Malabar and Cochin]

presence of *enangar*. The young children of a divorced woman might return with her to her 586
brother's house, but had the right to go back before puberty to their fathers' house.

In this system the husbands obtain both sexual and procreative rights in their wife, her 595
children becoming members of their patrilineal group. The wife herself does not, however, as
among Brahmans, become wholly incorporated as a member of her husband's lineage. A 613
sonless widow whose husband left no brothers had no rights to property or maintenance by 851
his family; she must return to her brother's house. She could not, as among Brahmans, adopt
on behalf of her husband or temporarily manage his property in the absence of adult kinsmen. [589]
Though her children belong to the husband's group, the wife appears as in North Malabar
to be only temporarily 'leased' by the husbands, on payments of the *kānam* sum, for her sexual [581]
and domestic services.

Moreover, though a woman cannot inherit property in her natal *taravād*, the bond 593
between brother and sister remains strong. The eldest brother is early regarded as the guardian 613
of his sisters, who observe partial avoidance and respect to him much as in a Nayar *taravād*.
It is significant that at divorce, a woman is returned to her brother, not to her father or the 428
headman of her patrilineal group. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their 586
children observe pollution in their own dwelling-group, assembling at the deceased's conjugal
house on the sixteenth day for final rites to the spirit. At the death of a man, his sisters' sons 593
have pollution, assemble at his house, and in the sixteen days of mourning perform offerings
to the spirit immediately after the deceased's sons, and before his younger brothers and 765
paternal grandchildren. At the death of a man, his sisters and daughters make offerings to
an image of the deceased on the fourteenth day, but the widow herself (unlike the Brahman [782]
widow) takes no part in death rites. This shows the strong tie persisting between a married
woman and her natal group, and the comparative lack of integration into the group of the 593
women who marry its men. The former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines
this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinsfolk, especially their brothers.[1]

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. A girl's *tāli* was tied before puberty by a boy, usually a small child, 588
of some local *taravād*, affinal or unrelated, into which the girl might marry. My informants
in Cochin and Walluvanād could not remember the details of the rite, which has died out
in the last twenty years. They knew that it must be done before puberty, and that the *tāli*-tier sometimes married the girl after puberty by the usual ceremonies.

According to Thurston & Rangachari (1909, VII, pp. 80–1), who describe the rite in [787]
Chavakkad, between Calicut and Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, I, pp. 285–
7) who describes it for Cochin, and Aiyappan (1944, pp. 159–60) for the whole central area,
the horoscopes were compared as for a marriage. The artisans provided an arrow and a
brass mirror which the girl carried in her hand, a plank of the milk-tree, the rouge-bottle
which figures in the eight auspicious objects, and a staff carried by the bridegroom. The [564]
local *Pānan* (a low caste of sorcerers and menial workers) brought a peacock-feather umbrella
for the girl and a 'war umbrella' for the boy. A week in advance, the carpenter planted the
south-east corner-post of the shed at an auspicious moment. For three days before the rites,
the girl was secluded as if she had menstruated. On the day before the rites, she was taken to
worship the sun, and was seated in the marriage-hall on a plank with a lit lamp, a vessel of
water, rice, plantain-fruits, and a coconut before her. Her mother's brother's wife parted her
hair and placed a gold coin on her crown, and the Tandan's wife (like the barber in North
Malabar) anointed this three times with oil, here poured from a leaf of the *jak* tree. The girl
took a ceremonial bath and was secluded in the house with a casket, a bell-metal mirror, and
a sword on a stool beside her.

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[1] The tie between sisters is also close. They and their children observe pollution for each others' deaths, and the sororate (forbidden among Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars) sometimes confirms the status of the mother's sister as a proxy mother. [587]

Nayar
Tiyyar

This partial avoidance between a woman and her older natal kinsmen begins after the 613
tāli-rite, when she receives the title *amma* (lit. 'mother'). In the rite, it seems, the girl is fic- 602
titiously made mature by the mock menstrual seclusion – before she is in danger of actually 588
becoming mature; her sexuality is then given away by her natal kinsmen to a vicarious hus-
band outside her lineage. For this is the one right in her forbidden to her natal kinsmen; 182
the rest – her domestic services and procreative power – remain theirs throughout her life.
Even among North Malabar Nayars and Tiyyars, with their virilocal residence, the brother 184
may call home his sister and her children and require her to divorce her husband. He must,
moreover, maintain her if she is divorced, and her children have the right to return to the
mother's brother's house as his heirs.

The unconscious desire for adelphic incest in these matrilineal castes appears in other 182
rites. I have mentioned the rites performed by the brother of a girl at her first menstruation
among South Malabar Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars. Later, when the South Malabar 184
Nayar woman was in the fifth or seventh month of her pregnancy, she was formerly seated 593
before her brother who poured tamarind juice into her mouth from the point of the *taravād*'s 613
ancestral sword. It was believed that he thus conveyed strength (*sakthi*, a generalized form of
energy believed to reside *par excellence* in semen) and also martial valour, into the body of the 843
first-born child. This seems a clear instance of the brother's unconscious wish to impregnate [827]
his sister himself, as well as an explicit recognition that, in matriliny, the mother's brother has
the rights of a *pater* in the child. [822]

Among South Malabar Tiyyars the tamarind-juice is given by the pregnant woman's
brother to her husband, and by the husband's sister to his wife. This rite is more in keeping [607]
with a patrilineal system in which the husband has primary procreative rights in his wife. At the same time, it seems likely that the rite reflects the brother's unconscious desire to pass his 'strength' to his sister and her child, through the husband, and the sister's desire to contribute to the making of the child, and thus usurp the role of her brother's wife. The rite is beautifully in keeping with double unilineal descent, in which brothers and sisters retain strong interest and rights in each others' offspring.

The unconscious fear, and underlying it, an unconscious desire, of women for sexual attack 184
from a male parental figure (the father in this case) probably appears also in the South Malabar
Tiyyar rites which precede the tamarind-drinking. These are to drive out evil spirits who may 843
attack the child in the womb. The woman sits at night before a group of washermen (Mannans) 789
who invoke the spirit in song, and perform devil-dancing in weird masks. By morning, the more
susceptible of the women present, overcome by the spirit, may go into fits. Finally a live cock 182
is held against the woman's forehead, and rice thrown over her head. If she has a fit, the [564]
cock is beheaded and its blood offered to the evil spirit. The rites are paid for by the woman's
father. In view of what is known of the beliefs concerning incubi in western societies (Jones [787]
1931, ch. 3), it seems probable that these rites issue from the unconscious female fear of being
attacked sexually by the father, and the recognition of the father's unconscious desire to kill [782]
the child in his daughter's womb. The Mannan devil-dancers (who sometimes consciously impersonate the dead ancestors of a propitiating Tiyyar lineage) may be interpreted to represent the woman's lineage forbears and thus, collectively, her father.[1]

Again, in all the groups studied the *taravād* is believed to be guarded by a group of snake- 000

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[1] This interpretation is practically certain in view of the almost identical ceremony carried out one year after the death of a South Malabar Tiyyar. It is believed that before this the spirit is earth-bound and cannot be invoked to pass to heaven. On the night fixed, small girls of the *taravād* sit before Mannan and Panan devil-dancers who, as in the pregnancy ceremonies, wear weird masks and sing to invoke the spirit. Late at night one of the girls may become possessed by it and talk like the deceased, and give commands to the family about its future conduct. After this ceremony the spirit is freed from its bonds to the earth (see Thurston and Rangachari 1909, VII, p. 91). Since the possession of the girls by an ancestral spirit here is of the same kind as in the pregnancy rites and both types of spirit are called *pedham*, there seems little doubt that the evil spirit who attacks is also ancestral and thus an *imar*.

Nayar

613 Again in all the groups studied the

776 taravād is believed to be guarded by a group of snake-
564 gods (*nagas*) who reside in the small grove in the south-east corner of the ancestral gardens. If they are offended, the snakes inflict the *taravād* with barrenness among women, disease, and
182 child-deaths. They are propitiated by the low caste of Pulluvar. A Pulluvar and his wife
184 come to the Nayar or Tiyyar grove and draw figures of the serpents in green, red, yellow, and black. They sing songs of entreaty to the snakes, and play on a musical instrument, while one
782 or more women of the propitiating *taravād*, who have observed sexual continence and food taboos for several days previously, dance round the figures with hair streaming. The snakes
787 then 'enter the bodies' of these women, who behave in a dissociated manner and speak with the voice of the possessing snake-spirit, announcing to *taravād* members the kind of propitiation necessary to overcome their wrath. Since they are the guardians of the *taravād*, are jealous of the marital sexuality of women born into it, can inflict them with barrenness, and periodically 'enter into' them, it seems likely that these totemic snakes are unconsciously regarded as phallic symbols of the *taravād*'s male forbears (whether matrilineal or patrilineal). Their 'possession' of the women would thus reflect the incestuous desires of women towards men of the parental generation in the *taravād*, and secondarily towards their brothers.

593 I have discussed in general terms the probable existence of unconscious incestuous desires between the individual and members of the parental generation and, as an extension
182 of this, between siblings. We must now face the problem of whether, in the matrilineal castes, a regular Oedipus complex exists: that is, of whether a man unconsciously wishes to kill his father and appropriate his mother, and whether a girl harbours murderous wishes towards her mother and incestuous ones towards her father.[1]

There seems little doubt that in the matrilineal as in the patrilineal castes, a 'normal' Oedipus complex must develop in early infancy. Even among South Malabar Nayars the physiological function of the male in procreation is clearly acknowledged, and a child is expected to resemble its father as well as its matrilineal kin. The Nayar infant must, moreover, be aware of the marital relationship between its parents, since it commonly sleeps in the
593 mother's room until the age of about four or until the next sibling is born. At about the age of
604 five to six, however, a change takes place in the relationship between a South Malabar Nayar child and its parental generation, and thus, we may suppose, in its unconscious attitudes to
182 these figures. A boy now comes under the discipline of his mother's brothers, and a relationship of reverence with underlying hostility begins to be formed. A girl becomes aware that her mother's brothers are her ultimate guardians and, though she may still approach them freely, she must submit to them. The father drops into the background. In a traditional household, whereas he might play with them freely as babies, he may not now interfere in the upbringing of his children. Even today, he may be already divorced and replaced by another husband: in Palakkara sixteen out of seventy Nayar sibling groups containing children under
[578] the age of fifteen had no contact with the *genitor* or his kin. The mother's brother thus takes over a great part of the role of *pater*. The relationship admits, however, greater conscious hostility than does the patrilineal father-child relationship. Despite the reverence demanded in public, Nayar men sometimes remark privately that they harbour murderous feeling towards their *kāranavan*: several have in fact killed him. Such conscious hostility to the father would be almost unheard of in a high patrilineal caste. The partial avoidance required between a man and his sister's son, and the extreme formality of their behaviour, reflect this underlying hostility. The relationship with the elder brother is, in etiquette, modelled on that

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[1] My data, as far as Malabar matriliny is concerned, contradict Malinowski's (1916) theory that the Oedipus complex is absent from the start in matrilineal societies and is replaced by the wish to marry the sister and kill the maternal uncle. They confirm Ernest Jones's (1924) conclusion that a normal Oedipus complex exists in matrilineal as in patrilineal societies, but that in matriliny repressed incestuous desire for the mother is extended to an unusual degree to the sister, and much unconscious hostility to the father deflected towards the mother's brother. Roheim's (1950, ch. 5) refutation of Malinowski's view and his analysis of the Oedipus complex of Normanby Island are also relevant.

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 182 184 *sambandham* lover he came in a different role. Among South Malabar Tiyyars the prospective husband might tie the *tāli*. But in this case, too, his roles were kept separate: the post-puberty marriage rites must be gone through if the bridegroom (with his brothers) became permanently married to the girl. In any case the ritual bridegroom was usually a small boy; this is the important point here. Among North Malabar Tiyyars a potential mother-in-law tied the *tāli*, or else the barber woman, though in this ceremony the barber is protagonist in the rites marking the girl's passage to womanhood. In the higher matrilineal castes, and among North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, the rite is performed by an elder of high rank. Among North Malabar Nayars, however, the lower caste Marar drummers (who, like the barber for Tiyyars, conduct Nayar funeral rites) play a role suspiciously like secondary bridegrooms, since they place ornaments on the girl's arms and address her for the first time as a married woman, before the *tāli* is tied.

588 182 833 My hypothesis is that in all these cases the choice of *tāli*-tier indicates, on the part of men of the society, a general, unconscious fear of deflowering women. Barbosa (Stanley tr. 1866, p. 7) gives us a clue to this when he says that even after the *tāli*-rite, Nayar mothers went 'begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women'. Castenada (Kerr ed. 1911), similarly reports that in the Zamorin's family the girl's kindred 'send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin, after which he hangs a jewel round her neck. . . .' Even for the Zamorin's sisters, therefore, the 'initiator''s role was unpopular: he must be induced with gifts to fulfil it. Hamilton (1727, p. 174) notes that the 'Nambourie or chief priest' must deflower the Zamorin's Nayar mistress (presumably at the *tāli*-rite) before the Zamorin could cohabit with her, and that 'some of the Nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute'. That the Nambûdiris' privilege was not one exacted under protest from the Nayars, but willingly accorded, appears from his remark that 'the common people cannot have that compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves'.

182 588 564 881 [842] [533] [789] The unwillingness to deflower a woman is explained on the grounds that it is a 'disgrace' and an 'unclean thing'. Here, evidently, is the clue to why the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli* was tied by a barber woman, and the rites symbolizing defloration, or perhaps conferring fertility on the woman, performed by a barber man. Tiyyar barbers, like their washermen, pollute Tiyyars and may not ordinarily touch them. Both castes attend at the real first menstruation of a North Malabar Tiyyar girl, where the barber man and barber woman perform ceremonies similar to those of the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. The Tiyyar washerwoman must at all times supply the girl with a lower cloth (*mattu*, 'change') in which to bathe on the fourth morning of menstruation. She supplies this cloth also for the bath after the mock seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. At the real puberty-rites, however, it is the headman of the washerman caste, and not a woman, who hands the clean loin-cloth on the third night to kinswomen of the girl, after singing a song designed to enhance her fertility.

564 881 182 842 [782] [533] The role of the washerman as a man associated with the fertility of women appears again in the first menstruation ceremony of South Malabar Nayars. Though the Nayar washerman washes ordinary cloths for Nayars, the lower caste, Tiyyar washermen (*Mannan*) provides the clean loin-cloth for bathing after menstruation and child-birth. At the Nayar puberty-rites, after the ceremonial bath on the fourth morning, the eldest washerman stands on the verandah and instructs the girl, who sits before him within the house, to make an offering with rice and coconuts to the sacred household lamp. While the natal kinsmen of the girl hide themselves on the back verandah (a place usually occupied by women) a group of washermen assemble on the front verandah and sing vulgar songs relating to sexual intercourse before the girl and her kinswomen, with a view to enhancing her fertility. At the end, her mother pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 rank, above the political system of the kingdom, and, in religious belief, the representatives
182 of God on earth. All of these father-figures are collectively physiological fathers of the Nayars,
so that in summoning them to deflower their women the Nayars call in real or classificatory
564 fathers as well. When the bridegroom is a higher caste man, moreover (as when Tiyyar barbers
call an elder of their caste), his venerable age leaves no doubt of his paternal role.

That the ritual bridegroom should be a father-figure to the community explains my
informants' memory that the Asan might deflower Nayar women, but might prefer to forgo
his right for money paid by some other bridegroom. It explains why the *desavari* must be present
to give permission for the Nayar rite (and the Tandan for the Tiyyar rite) and receive
money 'as if to recompense him'. The preliminary gifts by the high-caste Nayar girl's family
to Nambûdiri landlords, the *naduvari* and the Maharaja also bear out this hypothesis.

Among South Malabar retainer-Nayars and among Tiyyars a high-caste father-surro-
588 gate could not be obtained, so that 'they must perforce supply the priest's place themselves'.
184 The retainer-Nayars get round this by selecting an *enangan* to represent the whole caste,
who was deputed for the task by village elders and, supernaturally, by the position of the
182 stars at his birth. Even so, the hazardous nature of the rite is indicated by the need to perform
787 it at an auspicious time, when the astrologer (in some respects another father-figure since,
though of lower caste, he was traditionally the trainer of Nayar boys in their village gym-
nasium, and a priest of Bhagavadi) gave the word.

588 Among North Malabar Tiyyars the mother's brother's wife or the father's sister might
tie the *tâli*. She does this on behalf of her son, who is the proper husband for the girl, and before
604 the marriage-pole and the sacred household lamp (divine phallic symbols). In this caste
it is fitting that some kinsman or kinswoman of the bridegroom should perform the rite, because
184 Tiyyars are not polyandrous and a girl becomes temporarily incorporated at marriage into
her husband's dwelling group. Yet, if we assume the Oedipal fear, the Tiyyar bridegroom
182 could not tie the *tâli* himself, since he is (ideally and often) a cross-cousin. If he is the mother's
brother's son, he takes the girl, in this group where paternal claims offset matrilineal, from
her *kâranavan* and his own father, a terrifying situation in view of his unconscious Oedipal fears.
If he is the father's nephew, he takes her from her father and his own *kâranavan*, an equally
dangerous situation. The problem is surmounted by permitting the mother's brother's wife
or the father's sister of the girl to 'marry' her on behalf of her son.

564 The substitution of the barber-woman to tie the *tâli*, and the role of the barber as one
intimately associated with the girl's passage to womanhood, may perhaps be understood
[588] by considering the general role of barbers in Tiyyar social life. The barbers cut hair for
Tiyyars, and in South Malabar though not commonly in the north, their women are mid-
[305] wives. They rank parallel to the Tiyyar washerman with whom they are compared, since
both castes have polluting occupations but take part in the rites of birth, girls' puberty, and
[759] death. In North Malabar Tiyyar men may marry barber women hypergamously, their
[582] children being barbers by matrilineal descent. Barbers are thus socially and sometimes
physiologically the 'sons' of Tiyyars. They are also likened by the Tiyyars to their younger
brothers. Barbers may not give food to Tiyyars but must attend Tiyyar feasts, when they
sit on the left or 'younger' side of the feasting hall, the Tiyyars sitting on the right or 'older'
side. Barbers address Tiyyar men as 'elder brother', but Tiyyars address older barber men by
[693] name, as they do juniors of their own caste. Despite his low rank, however, the barber is in
some situations a paternal figure for Tiyyars. He assists the Tandan in his executive functions
[584] and may summon Tiyyar offenders to caste justice. An elderly barber is often a marriage-
[793] broker for Tiyyars, but he is primarily a priest for Tiyyar household rites. At a Tiyyar death
he instructs the heirs to make offerings to the spirit, in the form of a mud image which he
[782] makes. On the fourteenth day, he purifies the household by anointing its members with oil
[783]

Nayar
Tiyyar

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831 up in the marriage shed and the rites are conducted before it. Among Nayars it is planted
near the sacred corner-post which as we saw is probably a phallic symbol. Among Tiyyars
182 a small branch of the tree is tied to the marriage-pole, thus indicating, perhaps, that Bhaga-
776 vadi is being 'married' to the divine male tree. The girl is seated upon a plank of the milk-
tree. Among Nayars the *tāli*-rite is followed by offerings to appease the angry mother.

776 Bhagavadi or Devi (generic terms meaning goddess) is equated by Nayars and Tiyyars
with Durgha and with Kali or Bhadrakali, fierce puranic goddesses who were created by
Siva and are his consorts, though, unlike Parvathi his 'regular' wife, they are not represented
as actually married to him. Bhadrakali is a black, hideous-faced demon; she is encircled
with snakes, has a garland of skulls, four hands holding weapons, long claws and tusks, a
protruding tongue, and a mouth dripping blood. She rides upon a lion. She is said by Nayars
to have been born from fire which issued in anger from the third eye of Siva to destroy the
sacrifice which Daksha, Siva's father-in-law, had prepared for the other gods to the exclusion
of Siva himself. Bhadrakali destroyed the sacrificial objects and beheaded Daksha.

Durgha (who is often not distinguished by Malayalis from Kali) rides on a tiger and has ten hands holding weapons. These were given to her by the gods as emblems of their power, to enable her to kill Mahisasura, a buffalo-demon who had gained control of the worlds of gods and men. Both Durgha and Kali have destroyed, beheaded, dismembered, and eaten many other demons in their wars on behalf of the gods.

776 Other myths of Bhagavadi temples describe the goddess's devotion to Siva and attacks
on demons who opposed him. In the myth of the temple at Cape Comorin, Bhagavadi is a
773 virgin with eight brothers who divided between them the kingdom of Bharatha Kandam.
Bhagavadi took the southernmost portion round Cape Comorin. Here she did penance to
Siva and, when he promised her a boon, desired to copulate with him. He replied that she
must first kill Vanasuran, a demon who, by excessive penance to Siva, had gained control
of the earth. Vanasuran heard of Bhagavadi and came to marry her. He found her as a beautiful
maiden swinging in her garden. She requested him to bring her the flowers of three kinds
of fig tree, but, when he did so, she caused them to disappear.[1] Seeing she would not yield,
Vanasuran took his sword and fought the virgin who, appearing in terrible form, pierced
him with her own sword and cut off his head with her disc. His body disappeared in a hole
in the earth, from which sprang a bathing-pool called *chakkra-theertham* ('disc-water').

775 Bhagavadi is represented by Nayars and Tiyyars both as a mother and as a virgin.
The dead Nayar or Tiyyar virgin can, moreover, herself become a species of Bhagavadi.
588 It was formerly believed that if a girl died before the *tāli* was tied, her jealous and malignant
spirit hovered round the earth inflicting misfortune on her *taravād*. She was called a *Kannichāvu*
776 ('dead virgin'); a shrine must be erected to her and offerings made by her kin. It is this
curious equation of the mother and the virgin which leads me to believe that the virgins for
[782] whom the *tāli* is tied (and who are associated with Bhagavadi in the rites) are also unconsciously
likened to the mother.

773 I suggest an interpretation of the Bhagavadi myths which subsumes under one theory
both the myths and the *tāli*-rite. That Bhagavadi is their chief deity reflects the supreme
182 importance of the mother in the life of the Nayar and Tiyyar man. The myths show repressed
hostility to and fear of the mother which, because of the values of the kinship system, cannot
776 be made conscious and expressed openly in social life. That Bhagavadi dismembers and
eats the demons reflects the infant's projection upon the mother of his own oral frustrations
831 in the period of suckling (commonly prolonged to the age of three or four, but abruptly
terminated if a sibling is born) and his desire to attack and tear to pieces the mother.
Bhagavadi's snake ornaments, weapons, projecting tongue, tusks, claws, and lion and tiger

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[1] One of the trees was the *Ficus religiosa* (see p. 54).

853 846 608 king who as a child lost his mother and was therefore fed on the milk of an attendant woman, refusing to punish her son after repeated acts of treason on the ground that an ocean of milk flowed between them which a drop of blood would pollute for ever.

852 301 789 On the twenty-eighth day the child undergoes two ceremonies. The first is called *Erupathettu Kettuka*, or the "Tying of the twenty-eighth day." Before that day the child is not allowed to wear any ornaments. On the twenty-eighth day a silver or gold belt, or a mere cord with an ornament in the shape of a heart or a laurel leaf at the front, is tied to the waist of the child. The laurel leaf was most certainly meant as a charm in ancient days, while now it is nothing more than an ornament. The waist-belt occasionally has attached to it amulets made sacred by the repetition of *mantrams* or magical formulæ over it. Such amulets are worn for the purpose of preventing disease and keeping the child safe from the demons and other evil spirits.[1]

553 787 After this comes the name-giving ceremony. The astrologer announces the star under which the child is born and presents the horoscope. Then he mentions the initial letters of the names. Each star has generally two or three letters, and the whole of Sanskrit and Malayalam can be drawn upon for the names of deities beginning with those letters. The choice is really very wide, even with the most difficult initial letters.

852 602 431 [824] The child is not supposed to be carried out of its mother's family till the sixth month. Then, on an auspicious day it is taken to the father's house (if the father is a Nāyar) by the mother, with some tokens of respect to the father's sister. These presents generally are tobacco leaves (always a mark of respect among the Nāyars), betel, etc. The father's family generally gives a certain sum of money for the expenses of the coming ceremony.

852 262 [123] [613] [782] [783] These proceedings are preliminary to the ceremony of *Choru Koda*, or the giving of rice. For the first six months the child is given only the cooked flour of dried plantain fruits. Rice, which is the chief food of the Nayars, is strictly prohibited before the *Choru Koda*. As a boy of fourteen or fifteen, I have many times officiated in this ceremony, on one occasion as a member of the father's family and on others as a member of the maternal *Tharawad*. What is done is that the child is taken to the temple by its mother, accompanied by some women of the *Enangu* group, together with a male representative from the father's house (if the father is a Nāyar) and one from the mother's own family. There is an offering to the god of the temple in the form of rice cooked with milk and sugar, and all the party, after purifying

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[241] [114] [1] The question of origins is very difficult, yet we cannot pass without noticing the idea that the loin cords are the beginnings of dress. Professor Wilhelm Wundt, in his well-known book on *The Elements of Folk Psychology*, has shown conclusively that it has no reference to the development of clothing, but is entirely magical in its purpose (pp. 86–87). The prevalent custom among the Nāyars supports this view. The custom can be understood only in relation to the general beliefs about cord-magic and the efficacy of amulets attached to waistbands.

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themselves by bathing in the temple tank, come to the *Darsana* (the aspect towards 262
which the face of the image looks). There the priest brings the offering and the [783]
male member from either the father's family or the mother's own family takes a [782]
little of it on his pointing finger and gives it to the child. The child is supposed to
inherit the qualities of the person who gives it the sacred rice, an idea allied to the
superstition concerning godfather and godchild. There is, of course, a feast on the
day at the child's house.

"Chaque société générale," says M. Van Gennep, "peut être considéré comme une 852
sorte de maison devisée en chambres et en couloirs. . . . Chez les demi-civilisés ces 561
compartiments sonts soigneusement isolés les unes des autres et pour passer de l'un
à l'autre des formalités et des cérémonies sont nécessaires." This idea that in
semi-civilised societies stages of life are marked out with great precision so that the
passage from one to another necessitates ceremonies or "rites de passage" is appli-
cable only in a very limited sense in the case of the Nāyars. Among them such
ceremonies are few and very far between. The male children, after the *Churu Koda*, 561
or the rice-giving ceremony just now described, have only one other ceremony to
perform which is called *Sasty-Purty*, or the fullness of sixty years. Between his
sixth month and his sixtieth year a male member of the Nāyar Society has no *rites
de passage* to pass through. The *Sasty-Purty*, which takes place on his sixtieth birth- [886]
day, is a sort of jubilee, after which respectable people are supposed to retire from
worldly life. It is indeed a *rite de passage*.

Women have naturally more ceremonies than men. Apart from the *Talikettu* [881]
(described in the last chapter) a Nāyar woman has to pass through the ceremonies of [843]
Terundu Kuli (bathing after the first menses) and *Pulicudi* described above. After
she has become a mother a woman can be said to be free from all ceremonies till [886]
her sixtieth year, when, after a *Sasty-Purty*, she also retires from active life.

The Nāyar funeral ceremonies are of a very complex nature. They show a 764
great deal of Hindu ideas about soul and re-birth mixed with purely Nāyar beliefs
about *Pretrams*, ghosts, etc., etc. It is important, in this connection, to notice at the [177]
very start that the Nāyars make a clear distinction between the ceremonies per-
formed at the death of the eldest member of the family and those at the death of
others. The following is the procedure generally adopted at the death of a Nāyar.
As soon as a person dies he is bathed and clad in white, and laid on a bed made of
long plantain leaves. If it is the eldest male or female member of the family that 764
is dead, then all their relations on the matrilineal side present new cotton cloths, with 766
which the corpse is covered and tied before it is taken to be burnt. Only the eldest
members are burnt; others are buried. Apart from the greater importance attached
to the death of the eldest members, the ordinary funeral rites are in essentials the
same.

The presence of the *Mārān* (a particular caste among the Nāyars who perform 764
the lesser priestly functions) is absolutely necessary on the occasion. He is sent for as 564

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[564] soon as death has taken place in a house, and on his arrival undertakes the general
management of the ceremonies.

After the corpse is tied and laid on the plantain leaves, a ceremony called *Para Nirathuka* takes place. (*Para* is a measure of paddy, and *Nirathuka* means to place in line.) A coconut-oil lamp is lit and placed at the head of the corpse and immediately in front of it are placed three *paras* of rice. The significance of this ceremony is unknown to me.

766 *Ceremonies of Cremation.*—If the deceased is the eldest of a family the body is now cremated. A pyre is made of mango wood, and the corpse is placed with its head towards the south (the god of death, according to the Hindu mythology, resides in the south), and then covered with fuel. The nephew or younger brother lights the fire. Then all the members of the family and all others who have been polluted by contact with them go and bathe in the tank. During the process of burning there is a process called *Kumba pradikshanam*—which is manifestly an Aryan custom (*Kumbham* and *Pradikshanam* are two Sanskrit words: the first means a pot, and the second means to walk round). The ceremony, as its name implies, consists of walking round the pyre with a pitcher, the bottom of which is pierced. One of the family fills this pitcher with water and carries it three times round the burning corpse, dashing it on the ground at the end.

765 Two or three members of the family continue to perform funeral rites for the next fourteen days. As I have not taken part in it I do not possess first-hand knowledge.

765 For all the fourteen days, all the members of the family are under pollution.
783 The pollution, in the case of death, is very strong. All the members of the family are
untouchable, and any Nāyar who touches them must purify himself by a bath. On
[564] the fourteenth day is the purificatory ceremony. The *Mārān* comes in the morning
and gives everyone some oil. After smearing the body with these everyone goes
and bathes, and comes back clad in white. The *Mārān* then sprinkles holy water,
and a Brahmin priest purifies the house. There is generally a big feast for two days.

765 The feast on the fifteenth day is accompanied by some sports. All the men
526 of the neighbouring villages come for it, and there is great *tamasha*. How far this
could be identified with funeral sports elsewhere it is hard to say.

785 After these feastings one of the family undertakes a *Diksha* (which means a
● 782 vow) for forty-one[1] days or a whole year. During this time, the man who undertakes
765 the *Diksha* lives apart with a Brahmin. He is not allowed to talk to or see a woman.
He must not cut his hair or his nails. He must bathe twice a day in the river, or in
the tank, and lead a pure and pious life. If it is only for forty-one days, there is not
[527] much feasting at the end of it. If it goes on for a full year, there is a huge celebration,

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[1] All ordinary vows are taken for forty-one days. If you want to placate a deity you pray to him for forty-one days. If you want to make a big sacrifice it extends to forty-one days, etc.

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[782]
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with all kind of sports.[1] The family, which is supposed to have been in mourning during the whole period, goes back to its normal life.

M. Van Gennep considers the state of mourning as "Un état de marge pour les survivants, dans lequel ils entrent des rites de séparation, et d'où ils sortent par des rites de réintegration dans la société général (rites de levée du deuil)."[2] With regard to the first fourteen days in particular, a Nāyar family in mourning constitutes a special society. During this period, and to a certain extent to the period till the final rites (forty-one days, or one year) social life is suspended. The ceremony at the end of the year is then a *rite de réintegration*.

VI.—RELIGION AND MAGIC AMONG THE NĀYARS.

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The religious beliefs of the Nāyars show an extraordinary mixture of Hindu and Dravidian cults. All the temples are dedicated to Krishna, Siva, or Kartyayani. There are also a few *kavus*, or groves, for the worship of the lesser Hindu deities. But the important point with regard to this is that the Nāyars are, as a whole, a people almost without a religion,[3] and they use Hindu temples for practices which receive no sanction even in the generous vagueness of that creed. The religious conceptions of Hinduism have but the slightest influence on the Nāyar community as a whole. It is quite true that there are a good many devout Hindus among the Nāyars, but the very fact that the distinction of Saiva-ism, Sakti-ism, Vaishnava-ism, etc., have not reached them, is sufficient proof that, though they have been Hinduised in form and have belonged to the Hindu fold, their primitive beliefs have survived to a great extent.

Nothing shows so much the extreme persistence of primitive culture, even in the face of higher civilising agencies, than the wide and almost universal acceptance of spirit-worship, and the almost entire absence of religious life among the Nāyars after at least twenty centuries of contact with Hinduism. Their contact with religions has not been limited indeed to Hinduism. The Jews, flying after the destruction of their Temple, found refuge among the Nāyars, and have lived in their midst for nigh two thousand years. The Apostle St. Thomas is supposed to have planted a community of Syrian Christians among them, who also have lived side by side with the Nāyars as their social inferiors in Malabar for almost the same length of time. Ever since Mohamed founded his religion in Arabia, Allah has found faithful worshippers in Malabar who moved with equal status among the Nāyar population. The beautiful creed of Gautama Buddha had for long its devout votaries in the land of the Nāyars, and traces of Buddhist monasteries and survivals of Buddhist worship still

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[1] There is a story about a poet who enjoyed this celebration very much and said to the master of the house, "I hope there will be one like this here every year."

[2] *Rites de Passage*, p. 211.

[3] See the discussion following.

771 177 abound. The militant Romanism of the Holy Inquisition, and the no less militant Protestantism of the Dutch, had their chance, in turn, for at least a century and a half. Yet, with all the great religions of the world to choose between during the last two thousand years, it is nothing short of marvellous to see the Nāyars, who have, it must be remembered, assimilated a very great deal of the material and intellectual culture of their neighbours, and, more than that, excelled them in literature and music, still maintain with undiminished vigour their spirit-worship, black-magic, and demoniacal ceremonies, and are devoid of almost every element of true religious life.

771 We may be accused of the narrow use of a wide word in the phraseology of Tylor when we deny that the Nāyars have any religion apart from a veneer of Hindu influence. Their beliefs are mainly magical. Here, of course, I am treading on very dangerous ground, dangerous even to the initiated, but fatal to the novice. In this essay I have taken the distinction between religion and magic as being primarily a question of method rather than of intention or possible effect. The 771 114 orthodox French opinion that the difference between magic and religion is that the latter is social while the former is anti-social, has been proved by Mr. E. S. Hartland and Dr. Marett to be wholly untenable; while the contention of Dr. Marett himself[1] is that the difference between magic and religion lies in the attitude of society towards them.[2]

771 782 114 Among the Nāyars there is an implicit distinction between practices to propitiate a god and those with which to bully a spirit. Bullying a spirit for purposes of social benefit I have not considered to be religion, though it is recognised by society as beneficial and therefore according to Dr. Marett should be considered as religious—because it does not possess the emotional and the psychological elements which

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[1] *Anthropology*, p. 210 (Home Univ. Series).

[2] Dr. Marett has recently expressed his view thus:—

"The dominant social tradition tolerates in a community only certain practices and the beliefs associated with them. These may be said to constitute the religion of the community. It does not matter whether they embody customs such as sacrifice and prayer which are essential to the civilised man's notion of *his* religion, or whether they involve processes of sympathetic magic, etc., such as have for us become disreputable.

"On the other hand, when resort is had to the supernaturalistic means in order to gain selfish and anti-social ends we may speak of magic." (Class Lecture on Primitive Morals.)

Here Dr. Marett seems to go back to the French view and hold that the difference between magic and religion is that the former is selfish and anti-social while the latter is disinterested and social. The view here submitted is different. It is submitted that primitive society understands the difference between magical and religious customs even when both are essentially social and disinterested. To the primitive mind, the difference between religion and magic lies in the method and procedure of the ceremonies, or, as we shall now call them, the ritual. As method and procedure only reflect the mental state of the performer and the society to the benefit of which these ceremonies are performed, this difference is essentially psychological. This position is better explained by the Nāyar customs and beliefs noted below.

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Dr. Marett himself has, with great truth, insisted on as the essence of religion.[1] I 782
have called such practices magical, not only because they lack the emotional and 114
the psychological elements of religion, but also because the fundamental presupposition in such performances is the power wielded by the magician, the "*orenda*" which he has acquired, over the ghosts.

This is very clear from the Nāyar ideas of *Thēvar* and *Pisāchu*. *Thēvar* can 776
be propitiated but never conquered ; while a *Pisāchu* (or ghost), though superior to 771
man in power, intelligence and will-to-do-harm, can be rendered harmless and kept [782]
under control by magical practices. The former conception is clearly Hindu and [789])
relates only to Hindu gods. The spiritual ideas of the Nāyars themselves seem to be confined to ghosts, spirits, and to a comic elf called *Kutti-Chāttan*.

Before we proceed to consider them, the position of the magician in the Nāyar 791
community has to be made clear. It is generally taken for granted by anthropological writers that wherever social life is regulated by magical practices the *Shaman* 554
comes to be held in reverence. It is very interesting, therefore, to notice that the Nāyars never accepted the superiority of the magician, and never accorded him any privilege. The magico-medicine man is, on the other hand, considered to be a sort of servant-in-attendance on a nobleman's family, something like a family doctor. The explanation that it is due to the warlike character of the Nāyars is clearly inapplicable, as the magician attained kingly powers among the Masai, for example, whose society is also organised for purposes of war. The fact that the *Kāniyān* (or the magico-medicine-man) is not only not venerated, but actually considered an inferior, may be more due to the effect of caste-system, which places Nāyars high among the social scale.

The *Kāniyān* is, of course, recognised as a necessary person. He gets from all 791
the houses of the village settled remuneration, mostly in coco-nuts. He is not otherwise paid for ordinary consultation, and he is bound to attend to every case in the village without fail. For special exertions of his magical powers he has special payments settled by village custom. He has power, both inherited and acquired, to cast-off spirits, to perform preventive magic, and keep general control over ghosts.

There are supposed to be three kinds of spirits, *Prētam*, *Bhutam*, and *Pisāchu*. 775
A *Prētam* is the spirit of a dead man. The ghosts of men who died in the ordinary 776
course of events are not really *Prētams*, because they do not wander about to overpower people and drink their blood. It is generally the ghosts of men who died as a result of foul play, or by accidents such as drowning, or by terrible diseases such as smallpox and cholera that wander about at nights. A *Bhutam* is seen generally in marshy districts and does not always hurt people unless they go very near him. A *Pisāchu* is a general spirit of the air causing such diseases as smallpox. All those [753]

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[1] Threshold of Religion: Essays on Pre-animistic Religion, the Birth of Humility, and Is Tabu negative magic ?

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[776] spirits can be seen. At night their mouth is full of fire of different colours, but it
throws out no rays. That it throws out no rays is important because therein is
supposed to lie the distinction between an ordinary light and the fire in the mouth
of a spirit.

The *Prētam* is supposed to hover round its burial place or the place of its accident.
Everyone is warned off such a place at night time. The hours during which these
[754] *Prētams* appear are between 9 in the evening and 3 in the morning. It must be
noticed here that the *Prētam* of a "black-magician," as distinct from a social
magician like the *Kāniyān*, has more power to do mischief: it has more "*orenda*,"
so to say. The man who practises black magic invariably dies a violent death, and
his *Prētam* hovers round the scene of his former activities.

● 782 "Man dreads above everything else," says S. Reinach,[1] "illness and death,
753 punishments inflicted by the angry spirits with which his imagination peoples this
776 world." This is absolutely true with regard to the Nāyars. Disease is generally
[754] believed either to be the outcome of offending a god or due to the magic performance
of interested relations. Preventive sacrifice is very common, and every year all
[787] respectable Nāyar families perform some sort of propitiation ceremonies in the
village temple. If a whole village is ravaged by some epidemic, the villagers inquire
into the matter through the astrologer, and if he finds, as he usually does, that it is
due to the wrath of the village god or goddess, ceremonies of various kinds are at once
undertaken and goats are offered as sacrifice, and sometimes a *Desavalathu*, a procession of the people with images, around the village is performed.

75 But such occurrences are rare. Only epidemics are put down to the wrath of
775 offended gods. Other diseases as well as misfortunes are put down to the influence
of *Prētams*, bribed into action by jealous or covetous relatives. When any great
misfortune, such as a succession of deaths, happens in a family, the first thing that
is done is to consult the astrologer, who is sure that a ghost is working it under the
influence of magic. His prescription is, of course, counter-magic, to be performed by
himself. An offence to a god can easily be rectified if one does some elementary
sacrifices, but the performance of counter-magic is neither so inexpensive nor so
[751] easy. First of all one has to get rid of the evil already done. For that elaborate
ceremonies may be necessary. Secondly, ceremonies to keep one immune from
755 future attacks are essential. If it is any woman who is possessed of the devil, and
it is women who generally suffer from these things, an expensive and elaborate devil
dance called *Kolam Thullal* has to be performed. For this the village has to be
informed, and each family in the village is supposed to contribute something in kind
to the expenses and take its share in the work. The ceremony is as follows:—

Preparations for the dance must begin a good many days beforehand. The *Kāniyān* of the village with twelve others of his people come to the house where the

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[1] *Cults*, p. 27.

846

and takes it in his hands. The belief is, that the temperament 852
of the child is determined by that of the person who thus [828]
sprinkles the water. All the members of the *tarawád* observes [613]
pollution for fifteen days immediately after the delivery, during [793]
which period they are prohibited from entering temples and
holy places.

First birth-day celebration.

The twenty-seventh day after the childbirth or the first 553
recurring day of the star under which it was [853]
born, is an important day, on which the
káranavan of the family gives to the child [613]
a spoonful or two of milk mixed with sugar and slices of plantain
fruits reduced to a kind of pulp. Then he names the child
calling it in the ear by name, three times. In some places the nam- 553
ing ceremony takes place in the sixth month on the *Chórúnu* 574
day, *i. e.*, on the day of feeding. This is followed by a feast [613]
to all friends and relations, the expenses of which are met
by the *káranavan* of the *tarawád*. The child is not fed on 853
rice for some time after birth, the practice being to give it the
flour of dried plantain boiled with jaggery. There is a particular
variety of plantain known as *kunnan* used for this purpose.
Well-to-do parents in these days give Mellin's food.
The staple food, which is rice, is given to the child for the 852
first time, generally during the sixth month, and is, of course, 853
attended with some ceremony. Necessarily, the astrologer
fixes the day, and at the auspicious hour, the child is bathed and
adorned (which is the duty of the father), is brought and laid
on a plank. A plantain leaf is spread in front of it, and a bright
brass lamp is placed near. On the leaf are served a small
quantity of cooked rice, generally a portion of the rice offered
to some temple divinity, some tamarind, salt, chillies and sugar.
Then the *káranavan* or the father ceremoniously sits down [613]
facing the child. First he puts into the mouth of the child, a
mixture of tamarind, chillies and salt, then some rice, and lastly
a little sugar. Thenceforward, the ordinary food of the
child is rice. The ceremony is, in some cases, preferably per- [778]
formed in some famous temple, that at Guruvayur being a
favourite one for this purpose. A few annas is given to the [782]
priest, who gives a small quantity of the food offered to the [465]
deity, with which the child is fed.

551. The names of Nayars present great varieties and those most commonly met with are the following:—

(a) **Andi Menon**
Kandar Menon
Kannan Menon
Ittirayarachan
Korappan
Koman Menon
Kumara Menon
Thenchu Menon
Konthu Nayar
Eacharan Nayar

(b) **Raman**
Krishnan
Govindan
Gopalan
Achyuthan
Sankaran
Narayanan
Madhavan
Sreedharan
Raghavan
Neelacandhan
Velayudhan

(c) **Names of females:**
Kunjikavu
Chirutha
Ichon
Kotha
Nangeli
Ooli
Cheeru
Cheeronna
Ichi
Ittiri
Mukami
Oonni Maya

(d) **Kalyani**
Lakshmi
Madhavi
Rugmani
Seetha
Subhadra
Narayani
Dakshayani
Karthyayani
Meenakshi
Gowri
Bhargavi
Janaki
Parvathi
Sreedevi

(e) **Pet names of males:**
Appu
Appukuttan
Kuttan
Balan

(f) **Pet names of females:**
Nani *(Narayani)*
Mathu *(Madhavi)*
Kunju (**Kunjukutti**)
Eacheri *(Easwari)*
Parukutti.

551 564 The names of males given under (a) are those which appear to be caste names, probably given by the Nambuthiris, who are generally fond of these contracted and disguised appellations. The Nambuthiris say, that the Sudras were so ordained by Manu as not to be called by fair names. They were the landlords and priests, and the Nayars had to do servile work for them. They thought that they ought to keep the Sudras in complete ignorance, and could not endure to hear them talking distinctly in their presence. On one occasion, it is said that when a Sudra servant uttered the words "*Súrya Rasmi* (sun's rays)," his master was so displeased, that he closed his ears, for he could not bear to hear a servile fellow using so elegant a phrase from Sanskrit. On another occasion, when a Brahman overheard a Sudra uttering the words *ahimsa paramo dharma* (the highest of all duties is not to injure anybody), he said to himself, "what a pity it is, that a Sudra should be able to quote a vedic expression!". Their influence in these and other matters began gradually to diminish after the time of the great Malayalam [776] peot, Thunjathu Rámanujan. The names of the caste-men given under (b) are chiefly the various designations of Krishna, Rama and Siva, all of whom are worshipped with equal rever- [782] ence. Some think that the Nayars are chiefly the worshippers of Vishnu, but the fact that, when at Benares, Rameswaram and [769] other places, they perform the ceremonies of offering of rice-balls in honour of their deceased ancestors, calling their ancestors

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Sivagothrakár (worshippers or followers of Siva), would seem to 564 indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu. [782]

A Nayar tarawad or marumakkathayam family.

“No people” says Elie Reclus, “have more fully appreciated [769] the maternal family, nor developed it 613 more logically than the Nayars, despite the 592 accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious.”[1] The *tarawád* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *káranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grand children by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder [593] sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection [591] between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayars loved their families more than [842] anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who

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[1] Primitive folk, page 159.

536 intermittently blown. Such are the crude theatrical properties which the actor has to face.

[533] At about eight o'clock begins the *Thódayam purapád*, consisting of songs which are meant to initiate the audience into [782] the mysteries of the plot. But this takes place behind the drop curtain, which has not yet been drawn up. Next comes the *Vandanaslókam*—a song in propitiation of some particular god—and then begins the play. The actors perform only by means of dumb-show, and the music is provided by the singers who, though invisible, are close at hand. All changes of thought, feelings, and emotions are conveyed by means of gestures of which there are said to be sixty-four different kinds, and in the commingling of these, lies the skill of the actor. Inhuman and unchivalrous acts, such as chopping off the noses and breasts of women, are usually enacted behind the scenes; though, in certain cases, these are made realistic by the characters to be victimised wearing false noses and breasts. [435] It is not until the dawn of day that the play ends. The cost of a night's performance is only about fifteen rupees, while the cost of all the stock in trade is often less than 400 rupees.

536 176 A special innovation in this direction was made by the Valia Kovil Tampurán of Travancore and others who translated a few of the most important Sanskrit dramas. They introduced a real improvement in the construction of the stage and scenery, as also in the mode of dress, the style of music, and the method of acting, all of which were changes for the better. Dramatic companies were organised in many places where the plays were acted. They were at first very popular, but most of them disappeared as they did not play; but yet poets and versifiers still continue their work of producing plays for the stage.

536 *Mohiniyáttam*.—This is an institution, very much like the nautch of the East Coast. A leader (*Nettuvan*) obtains the service of two or three young girls of low birth and trains them for the performance. He takes the girls from house to house, gets a paltry allowance for each day's performance, and thus makes a living. The performance is usually acted at night, when the girls, dressed in the gaudy attire, are led by [654] the *Nettuvan* in an amorous dance. This is an abominable institution, and the women who are thus rented out are looked

upon with contempt. It must be noted that they live separately, having little or nothing in common with the other classes, and that the institution is dying a silent and natural death. 536 [554] [182]

Songs.—There have been very many songs current among the Nayars even from a very remote period; and they are chiefly composed and sung in honour of deities, and are mostly prayers addressed to them. A translation of these is not here attempted, for they lose much of their beauty, but the following, however, are the most important of them:— 533 [782]

Bhadrakali Páttu:—These are songs which are sung in honour of Káli, and are supposed to have been composed by the Sudras of Palghat long before the Malayalam era. Certain dramatic songs also appear to have been composed about the same time, and refer to the deities on the hills as well as to the kings of the period. They are sung in towns and villages, between Anamala and Trichur in the east, and the Walayar forests on the other side. The ancient name of these localities was Cheranad, and it was the first place to be occupied by people, when Kerala was a marshy tract. As evidence of this, remains of houses are still to be seen at the foot of the hills. In a place of such historic importance were composed and sung these songs, which are so full of the ideas of the Vedanta and Yoga philosophies, and which give a clue to the nature of the people who once lived there. There is also another variety of songs referring to *Dárikavadham*, (murder of the demon Dárikan), and they are sung by a class of men called the *Kurippans*. There are also other old songs such as the *Sásta páttu* (songs in honour of Sásta). [173] [172]

Ganapati páttu (songs in honour of Ganapati) and serpent songs:—Among the old songs, those referring to agriculture, and composed during the third century of the Malayalam era, occupy a prominent place, and the agriculturists of the northern parts of the State even to-day follow the precepts laid down in these songs. But excepting, the song commemorating the deeds of *Meppayil Kunji Othenan*, the Robinhood of North Malabar, there are no songs which sing of the deeds of brave men.

The chief festivals.—(1). *Onam*:—This is an important national festival, which falls in the second half of August or the first half of September, and is celebrated in commemoration of Mahábali, an *Asura* king, whose reign is believed 796 773

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laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. 796 When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such commodities 184 was passing through Chittur, the people of the four *desams* of Chittur, *viz.*, Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam, [439] and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and [492] goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information, naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the *Pramánakkars* of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people even including women and children. On receiving the ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody, it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document [776] was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them. On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the [314] boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans [273] of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a body climbed down the trees, and without removing their breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view [564] of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religi- [782] ous vows made by them for the attainment of particular

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796 objects, such as recovery from illness, success in litigation,
184 birth of children, etc.

[782] When the information of the crossing of the Walayar by the chief of Kongu was communicated to the people of the four *desams* by the Izhuvans, they repaired to the temple in excitement and consternation, when Lo! the temple gates opened of themselves and a beautiful female form dressed in full battle armour, brandishing a shining sword and shedding a resplendent divine light, suddenly emerged out of the image within and marched off direct to meet the advancing army of the Kongan, followed by all the brave men among the
796 people. The battle was fought with the result already mentioned. This battle is enacted on the night of the Konga-
184 pada festival as one of its essential functions, accompanied by the beating of numerous Pariah drums, blowing of horns, racing of horses, torch-light processions, besides, of course, the usual mischief-making among the youngsters, but the elders generally control them and stop excesses. In the course of the sham fight, some act as the wounded, some even as the dead and fall down on the field of action. These dead and wounded are immediately taken up and carried by the youngsters to their supposed respective houses in the town accompanied with torch-lights, beating of drums, beating of breasts, and crying and weeping. No outsider is allowed to take part in this sacred function. If an outsider, being possessed with any sudden fit of enthusiasm, attempts to take part in this function, 'woe be to him.' This battle function takes place at about 10 o'clock in the night and lasts for two or three hours. At the end of it, the night procession of the festival begins from the battle-field and moves through the Nayar quarters to the temple, where it reaches just before day-break, when there is a display of fireworks. After day-break, the chief of the place or *Nádduvázhi* represented by the Chambath house, accompanied by the people, go to the Goddess' temple to offer prayers of love and gratitude to the Bhagavati. The festival is wound up by a performance on the following night called '*Devendra pallu*' in which all the "one hundred Nayars"[1] of Chittur are

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[1] The Nayar community of Chittur is collectively called by the name of "Chittur Nooru Nayar." It shows that the original village organisation of Chittur consisted of one hundred Nayar houses or families. Although there is a considerable increase in the number of Nayar houses at present, the appellation 'Nooru Nayar' is still used.

supposed to take part under the supervision and guidance of 796
the Srikandath Panikkar, whose family is the military in- 184
structor and leader of the people of Chittur. The Panikkar's duty is to train the youths of the 100 houses in the military arts. The performance referred to is, more or less, an exhi- [431]
bition of the bodily prowess of the youths trained by the Panikkar, and at the end of it he receives presents from the *Nāduvāzhi* and one hundred fanoms—one fanom for each house—from his pupils. The amount of one hundred fanoms is still paid to him every year, and is defrayed out of the collection made for the Kongapada festival for which the Panikkar's family is exempted from the payment of all subscriptions. The training of the youths of the place is begun a few weeks before the Kongapada festival in the *kalari* (military gymnasium) of the Srikandath Panikkar, and the Panikkar takes a prominent part in all the functions connected with the festival from beginning to end.

The "Pana" festival of Chittur.

Once in a few years and commencing on an auspicious [777]
day after *Vishu*, this ceremony is performed on a grand scale, in which the Nayars of the town (one male member from almost every house) organised themselves into parties, one party for singing songs in praise of the Goddess Bhagavati, another for dancing before her, and the third for playing on musical instruments. These men [782]
have, during this period, to bathe early in the morning, cook their own food and remain under a vow to be ever in devotion to the deity. Preliminary to the celebration of the actual festival, which sometimes run for a number of days, the men are given 41 days' training in the several courses of dancing in the Porayattu family house, one of the four *Pramānakkars* (leading members) of the place, and the final performance takes place in the Pokkumarath house.

In the court-yard of the latter house a large pandal supported on 64 posts, is put, up and in its middle is drawn a floral diagram (*padmam*) over which a lighted brass lamp, and in front of it a stool, are placed with a metal pot of water surmounted by a full pod of cocoanut flowers and a washed cloth arranged in the form of a beautiful crown. The Goddess, who [782]
is supposed to be located therein by means of holy *mantrams*, is propitiated every night between 9 and 12 P. M., with offerings and *pujas*, to the accompaniment of drumming, singing,

184 and dancing. This nightly routine of *pujas*, offerings, dancing,
[782] etc., is thus continued for the prescribed number of days.

On the morning following the last day, the votaries purify
[535] themselves by a bath and fetch branches of *pala* trees, and a
[776] dancing procession is organised, which wends its way through
the Nayar streets, accompanied by the Goddess[1] manifested through her *Velichapad*, to the temple of the Goddess, and
from there disperse to their respective houses before evening
after singing songs of praise and thanks-giving in honour of
the Goddess. A pit, 15 feet long, 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep,
is then made and filled with ten to fifteen cart-loads of fuel
which is burned and reduced to glowing red hot charcoal.
[787] Here also is performed a *puja*. At about 4 A. M., the *Velichapad* through whom the Goddess manifests herself, the priests,
[789] the votaries, and lastly the caste-men, all walk over the fire
several times.

[782] The day dawns and the senior member of the Porayattu
family sitting on the stool consecrated to Bhagavati, and
covering his head with the silk cloth of the deity, propitiates
[753] her with offerings of fruits, cocoanuts, and fowls. The whole
ceremony is thus brought to an end. The object of this pro-
[789] pitiation is to protect people from the attacks of cholera,
small-pox, and other epidemics.

Agricultural ceremonies.

241 Before closing this part of the subject, it may be noted that
the agricultural year begins with the *Vishu* (first
of Medam, about the middle of April) at which
[787] the hot weather is supposed to terminate. In families where
the members pursue agriculture as a profession, they send for
the local *Kaniyan* (astrologer), who estimates by astronomical
calculations the agricultural prospects and the probable quan-
[824] tity of rain during the ensuing year. He is also asked to
choose an auspicious day for ploughing, and on that day the master of the house goes to the seed-store with his Pulayan slaves and takes out a small quantity of each variety of seed, which he puts in a cup made of the leaves of the *kanniram* (nux vomica); he then places the cups in a basket near a lamp in the yard and places a small heap of rice around or near it. A new ploughshare fastened to a plough, and a pair of oxen are also brought, and these are painted with rice water. They are then taken in procession to the field, on reaching which the

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[1] [i.e., The Goddess Bhagavati -- Analyst]

Pulayan head-man raises a mound of earth on which are thrown 241
a little manure and a handful of seed. He then yokes the cattle to the plough and turns a square plot of ground, taking care to have furrows made in it, and the plough dropped on the right. [782] Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and the master throws the seed in the furrow, when the Pulaya [776] head-man invokes the blessings of the gods and the deceased ancestors on the seeds that have been sown broadcast, on the cattle that are let loose, and also on the members of the family, and prays them for a good crop, much sunshine, and a good harvest. A cocoanut is then cut on the ploughshare, and if the hind portion is larger than the front one, it predicts an excellent harvest. [787] If the nut is cut into two equal portions, the harvest will be moderate; if the cut passes through the eyes of the nut or if no water is left in the cut portions, misfortune is foreboded. The portions of the cocoanut are then picked up with the milk inside them and a leaf of the *tulsi* plant (Ocymum sanctum) is dropped into each; if the leaf turns to the right, a prosperous harvest is assured; if to the left, the contrary. The ceremonial concludes with loud shouts and invocations to the gods of husbandry; and the unused seeds are distributed among the workmen.

Nira :—The bringing in of the first fruits (*Nira*) is cele- [356]
brated at the end of Karkadagam (August), previous to which [824] the doors and windows of the houses are cleansed with the leaves of a tree called *paragam* (Ficus hispida) and decorated with rice flour, while the walls are white-washed, and the yard smeared with cow-dung. On the gates of the houses are [824] placed various kinds of flowers together with their leaves and branches, *viz* :—*athi* (Ficus racemosa), *ithi* (Ficus venosa), *arayil* (Ficus religiosa), *peral* (Ficus Indica), *illi* (young bamboo leaves), *nelli* (Phyllanthus Emblica), *jack* (artocarpus integrifolia), and *mango* (manganefera indica). On the morn- [793]
ing of the ceremonial day, the priest of the temple comes out [534] preceded by a Marar blowing a conch-shell, when a bunch of the ears of paddy already placed by the Pulayans outside the outer wall of the temple is taken by him to the temple with the same Marar blowing the conch. [783] Every house-holder then sends out to the fields a man duly purified by a bath and smeared with ashes to gather some rice. As he brings it to

241 the gate of the houses, he is met by a woman with a lighted
lamp and some leaves on which is placed the rice. This is
carried into the yard in procession, while those assembled cry
out, 'Fill, fill, increase, fill the house, fill the basket, fill the
stomach of the children'. Three times is it carried on a plantain
leaf placed on a wooden plank while the lighted lamp is
782 placed on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings,
and stalks of paddy with ears of grain in them are stuck
776 with cow-dung to the various parts of the house, to the agricultural
implements, and even to trees. A sumptuous breakfast
brings the ceremony to a close.

Puthari:—The next ceremony is the formal cooking and
eating of the new rice (*Puthari*). It sometimes takes place on
the *Nira* day, but generally it is an independent festival. An
777 auspicious day is chosen as soon as the first crop is harvested
and threshed—a day which must be before the *Onam*. The
263 rice is cooked and eaten with a special curry made of *tagara*
(Cassia tora) peas, the fruit of *puthari chunda* (Swertia
Cherata), brinjals (Solanum Melongena) and green pumpkin.

Ucharal:—At the end of Makaram (January-February),
when the second crop has been harvested, the year's agricultural
operations are supposed to be over, and Mother Earth, *Bhúmi
Dévi*, is considered to rest during the hot weather until the
776 first shower begins. At the beginning of this period the Malayali
observes a festival in honour of the Goddess' menstruation,
which, like the *Roman Februria*, is supposed to take place at
this time. On the last three days during this festival, all granaries are closed, paddy is not sold, and no implement of agriculture is touched, while even the rice to be eaten during these three days is pounded before-hand. On the first day before sunset the granaries are closed, some thorns and shrubs of broom are fixed to the door and cow-dung and ashes are spread in front of it. The next two days are holidays for all; the house must not be swept, nor the floors smeared with cow-dung, and the garden even may not be swept or watered. On the fourth day the granaries are opened, and a basketful of leaves is taken to the field and burnt with a little manure perhaps to indicate that the cultivator remains in possession.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS

(Continued).

564 771 776 Religion. The high caste Nayars profess Hinduism and follow most of the religious practices of the Brahmans whose influence in matters religious as well as social is supreme all over the State. They worship the superior deities of the Hindu pantheon (Siva, Vishnu, and their consorts, as also Ganapati) in *ambalams* or *kshetrams* (temples) of which there are in the State many that have long been in existence. Everywhere in the State, the caste-men and women with their children may be seen going to worship the deities in their local temples both morning and evening after their baths in the [264] public tanks. It is only after this worship that they take their meals, and seldom do they depart from this rule. They also adore the minor deities, namely, Subramanian, Ayyappan, Sástha or Vettakkorumakan, Bhagavati, as well as Kali, the goddess of small-pox, and malignant demons, such as, Kutticháttan, Mundian, Gulikan, Gantákaranan. But these deities [346] or demons are located in *kávus*, mere unpretentious structures with the characteristic tiled roofs and ornamental gables. [532] These deities are represented by carved or uncarved pieces of stone placed on elevated seats beneath the *ál* (Ficus religiosa), the *pala* (Echites scholaris), or the *kánniram* (strychnos), and the priest is usually a non-Vedic Namburi, an Elayad, a Músad, [782] or one of the Sudra castes. The deities such as Subramanian and others above mentioned, are the sons of Siva, and require no animal sacrifices, but the host of demons require to be propitiated with offerings of goats, or fowls, while their wishes are often interpreted by oracles, who are known as *velichapads*.

The Cochin State, as well as Malabar and Travancore, is the land of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, and as well as

belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the 564
religion of the Nayars. Animism refers to the belief that man 771
passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of 776
powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere
shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no
idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres
of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over
small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks,
others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools
and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated [782]
by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about,
and the essence of these practices is magic.

Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors 769
is to be seen in the kistavens (*thoppi kallús*)—the rock
caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and
other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the
offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped
even now in special *kávús*, sometimes even in small
out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days
or *Sankrántis*, and there are also periodical commemorations
on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors [532]
are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver
kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of
food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankránti*
nights. Animistic again is the worship of Káli or Bhagavati 771
who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies 776
that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants [789]
and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which [754]
Brahmans also share.

Serpent worship.

Serpent shrines (*Nágattán kávús* or *Nagakóttas*) are to be 771
found in the compounds of every Nayar house 778
in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies 825
a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayars and
other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the
adoration of serpents in the Keralólpathi.

The first Aryan colonists settled by Parasurama found Kerala 773
absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve 778
their condition, returned to their old country. After their 825
departure, the Nágas (or serpent gods) of the lower world or [776]
Páthála took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled

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778 thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding
825 the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but
[776] Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the
early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner
of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further
ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground,
untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of
the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be
allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name
778 *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several
771 stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called
chitrakúdam, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a
825 low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into
[782] that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential
to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and
[753] periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of
[776] these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia,
among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore
regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods
along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and
frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

793 The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát
795 Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said
778 to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent
825 from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he
[782] is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation
and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this
removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel.
[564] The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the
[841] low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is
[783] so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of
the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a
[787] vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy.
The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for
771 snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and
778 water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a
825 woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the
[841] grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to
[782] sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to
[532] re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

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made even of gold or silver and consecrated for worship in 778
Brahman houses. They are also presented to Brahmans by 825
those on whose date of birth an eclipse falls, and this is done [532]
to mitigate the wrath of Ráhu.

Cases of snake bite are of frequent occurrence in the 755
northern parts of the State where snakes abound; and nowhere 759
else is the Hindu treatment so skillfully practised as to effect
a radical cure by medicines and incantations. When information [787]
regarding snake bite isconveyed to a physician, or a bitten
man is taken to him, the latter can, by the chirping of a lizard
or other tokens, make out the nature of the case and also
whether it is curable or not. It is said that physicians should 755
not go to a patient's house, and the following story is given in 759
explanation :— 773

Once when the emperor Parikshit was ordained to be bitten by the great serpent Takshaka, the latter set out in the disguise of a Brahman. On his way he met another Brahman, who, on enquiry, turned out to be a physician on his way to cure the king. With a view to test his ability, Takshaka bit a tree which was at once reduced to ashes, but the physician removed the poison, and the tree regained its former state. Takshaka, admiring his ability, loaded him with immense wealth and dissuaded him from going to the king. He also
made him promise that he should never volunteer his services
in such matters unless patients were taken to him. In some [428]
families the profession is hereditary, the most prominent among
them beingt he families of Kokkára Nambuthiri and Máliyakal
Karta.

Tutelary deities.

In every village are to be found guardian deities that protect 776
the villagers from the malevolence of demons which are supposed to occupy an in-
termediate place between gods and men. The temples of the [778]
Nayars in which are enshrined these village deities or *Gráma-dévatas* are far less imposing than those of the Brahmans and are callad *kávus*. The deities commonly represented are the consort of Siva or some manifestation of that female divinity, and Ayyappan or Sasta; and these are supposed to keep in subjection the demons and spirits which are ever prone to do harm to
the people of the village. Thus, though the demons are objects [782]
of worship, the propitiation of the guardian deities and the festivals held in their honour are considered to be sufficient to curb

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● [782] the malignant propensities of those spirits. The most popular
of the festivals is the *Mandalam*, which begins on the first of
796 Vrischigam (middle of November) and lasts for forty-one days.
776 In addition to the daily *pújas* to the image of Bhagavati by
Brahman priests, special rites and ceremonies (*Kálamezhuthum
Páttum*) are also performed by a particular class of Sudras to
the figure of the goddess made on the floor by means of
776 coloured powders, while the devotees sing songs in her praise
791 to the accompaniment of lute-like musical instruments. A
796 [534] man in a fantastic dress with an array of jingling bells round
[532] his loins, heavy sounding bell-metal anklets on each foot and a
scythe-shaped sword in his hand impersonates the goddess and
dances to the sound of tom-toms round the figure of the god-
[785] dess Bhadrakáli on the floor. The *Velichapád*, as he is called,
becomes highly excited and in his frenzy sometimes even cuts
[787] his forehead and causes it to bleed. He speaks, or rather the
deity speaks through him, in broken yet commanding tones
wholly unlike his own and makes oracular responses to the
enquiries addressed to him.

796 On a night in the latter part of the month of Dhanu (early
776 in January), a golden image of the goddess is placed on the back
[532] of a big decorated elephant, and, amidst the beating of drums,
[788] the firing of pop-guns and crackers, is taken out in procession.
The elephant with the goddess is supported on each side by
[231] elephants whose numbers vary according to the means of the
[791] villagers. The *Velichapád* is indispensable and is accompanied
by a group of well-dressed women and girls, each carrying in
her hand a plate (*tálam*) full of rice and a light placed on the
[782] top of it. The festival ends with a display of fire-works, and
the ceremony closes with the sacrifice of goats or fowls. On
the same principle but on different lines are celebrated various
propitiatory and sacrificial festivals in honour of the other
[782] aforesaid deities. Generally, after the harvests, the *Velicha-
páds* are taken out in procession to the Hindu houses in each
village to receive offerings of a measure of paddy and small
coins.

776 ***Sásta*** or ***Ayyappan.***—According to Kerálólpathi, Parasu-
778 rama with the object of protecting the newly created country
(Kérala) is said to have established many temples and dedicat-
[788] ed them to this deity. The most important of these is at
Sabarimala in the Chengannur Taluk of Travancore, which

attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala* 776 778
púja from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is [788]
peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of
worshippers.[1]

Demon worship.

The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a 776
very great extent the outcome of a belief in, 771
and a constant fear of, the influence of demons
and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a
very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the
lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of
Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that
not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the
State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers,
from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Parayan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the
Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft
are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of
Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found
special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert
the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that [564]
there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and
another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high [782]
caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by
the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime
manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli
in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a 776
distinction between *Bhútas* on the one hand, and *Prétas* 775
and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the [766]
messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are
the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are
believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon
mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the 775
chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who [787]
walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or
on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to
call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into
distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at
night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

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[1] Vide Religion of the Izhuvans, Vol. I, page 313.

775 time. At the period of puberty and after child-birth women
[881] are especially liable to the attacks of these aërial beings.
[846] Charms and incantations, offerings and sacrifices, are the most
[789] requisite to counteract the evils that demons do, and iron
[782] rings, iron staffs, and leather shoes, are some of the specifics
that help to keep the demons at a distance.

They make their abode chiefly in the palmyra and *pála*
[787] trees, but some of them occupy even dwelling houses. Others
take the shape of human beings, while yet others possess
human beings.

775 Their name is legion, and they exist by the offerings of
782 their votaries and their tormented victims. Against the machi-
nations of these demons, the sorcerers and exorcists bring to
[776] bear the influence of their special guardian deities who in turn
[791] must be propitiated with offerings before they can be called
upon to use their beneficial strength. In the case of the evil
[783] spirit of him who has died an unnatural death, a Brahman
magician purifies the spirit by means of certain ceremonies
called *Tilahóma* (an offering of sesamum seeds to *agni* or fire).
[789] A Chendus Nambuthiri presides at such ceremonies and trans-
fers the spirit to an image of gold, silver, or wood which is
afterwards placed in a Vishnu temple or enshrined in a small
building put up for that purpose, there to rest in peace.

771 In the State, temples are dedicated to various demons,
346 the chief among them being the Avanangáttil Cháttan in
775 Triprayar. The temples dedicated to the small-pox demon
correspond to the *Péy Kóvils* or devil temples of the Tamil
[753] Districts. In these temples are to be found the instruments
[796] and symbols of demon worship, the dancing sticks or wands,
the priests' garments, tridents, etc., whilst in others there is
nothing save the images of demons. There is also an officiat-
[793] ing priest, who is the devil driver and the devil dancer, and
[791] who at times even becomes a *Velichapád* inspired to communi-
cate to the votaries, who consult him in times of illness and
calamity, the wishes and intentions of that particular demon.

Worship of animals and plants.

771 To a Hindu all organic life is sacred, and his creed is
825 not to injure any living thing, while among
the animals worshipped by him the cow occu-
pies the first place. The cow is *Kámadhénu*, the giver of all
things, and hence whenever a cow is approached, it is touched

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with the hand which is, in token of veneration, then raised to 825
the head. Milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung are mixed together
and used for purificatory ceremonies; and the images of [237]
gods are anointed with this holy mixture called *panchagavyam*. [778]
Small doses of it are even taken internally, and it is [755]
considered an antidote against poison, besides being prescribed
as a *práyaschit* or expiation for offences against caste, whereas [778]
the sprinkling of water mixed with dung removes sin or pollution [783]
from all persons, places, or things, and purifies them.
The bull, the vehicle of Siva, is also held sacred, and a statue [532]
of it in granite is either placed in front of the image of Siva [776]
or in a separate shrine, and is worshipped as a God. The
lizard associated with Siva, the monkey with Hanumán, the
Garuda (the brahmany kite) with Vishnu, and the peacock of
Subramania are a few of the other animals of Hindu veneration.

Of the birds of ill omen, one species of owl called *pullu* 825
is much dreaded because of the belief that it causes an illness 753
to children which results in emaciation. At the sound of its
screeching, children are taken into a room to avoid its injurious
gaze. Various are the propitiatory ceremonies performed [782]
by specialists to secure its good-will and to prevent its doing [789]
harm to babies; and amulets are worn by children as a
preventive against its evil influences. Its hideous screeches
are always associated with death.

Among trees, some are worshipped while others are used 771
for *pújas* or sacrifices. Among the former may be mentioned 824
the pipal (Ficus religiosa), a tree which is held in veneration
by the Hindus. Persons afflicted with maladies or whose planets [755]
are unfavourable, go round a pipal tree, seven, twelve,
forty-one, or one hundred and eight times, muttering prayers
and burning camphor and other incense at its foot or perchance
engage Brahmans to do so, in the belief, that it will cure
disease or counteract evil influences. The *vilva* (Ægle marmelos),
whose leaf of triple form is supposed to represent the
three eyes of Siva, and symbolise his triple function of production,
destruction, and re-production, and the *tulsi* (Ocymum
sanctum), which is sacred to Vishnu, are also worshipped. In [778]
front of every house, generally on the eastern side, or in the
central yard of a quadrangular structure, is a stone or mud
altar, on which *tulsi* or the *vilva* is planted and watered every
day, and is worshipped by the inmates of the house. From

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824 the *tulsi* are also made rosaries, which, in addition to being
[778] an aid to prayers, are also used as ornaments for the neck.
[301] Among the trees used for *pûjas* or sacrifices are the sandal-
● [782] wood, the *plâsu* (Butea frondosa), the *rudrâksham* (Elæocarpus lanceolatus), the *darbha* (Poa cynosuroides), the *karuka* (Agrostis linearis), the *thumba* (Leucas Indica), *chembarutti* (shoeflower, Hibiscus Rosa sinensis), *erikku* (Calotropis gigan-
[278] tea), *thechi* (Chrysanthemum), and the several species of lotus and jessamine; and of these one and all are extensively used for medicinal purposes.

77
538 Folk tales.

The belief in demons and the habit of attributing all that cannot be easily accounted for to supernatural powers, have built up an edifice of folk-tales that would prove of great interest to students of folk-lore, some of which are given below:—

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[821] The eclipse is ascribed to the devouring of the sun or moon by the huge serpent Râhu, and while it lasts, a kind of pollution is observed by the people, for during the period of eclipse, food and drink are supposed to acquire poisonous properties.

[775] People who hear stories of Râmâyana, while lying on their beds, will become blades of grass in their next birth.

[821] [825] [823] Will-o'-the-wisps are accounted for, as lights emitted by a kind of precious stone (*mânikka kallu*) from the mouths of serpents, which, owing to their long life, are believed to have acquired the art of flying. Popular belief is that some serpents have been blowing for ages upon gold, embedded in the strata of the earth, and converting it into precious stones of the nature above mentioned. They keep them in their mouths, and acquire the power of flying in the air, with the stones shining brilliantly when they open their mouths.

825
539 When the crow and the fowl were first created, they were asked which they preferred, personal beauty or long life. The fowl preferred the former, and the crow the latter. Hence it is that the crow is said to possess a long lease of life.

The crow is supposed to possess only one eye, though apparently it has two. One eye-ball is said to move first in one socket, then into the other as necessity requires. The story is connected with a strange myth.

the water leak out by making holes in the pot as he walks 613
round. On completing the third round he dashes the pot on 764
the ground close to the spot where the head of the dead had been placed. This circling round (*Kumbhapradakshinam*) is said to symbolize that the deceased has had his ablution in the water of the Ganges. Then the chief mourner and others bathe in a tank or river, perform an ablution of water (*Udakakriya*) to a piece of *karuka* grass stuck up to represent the spirit of the dead. A small image of the deceased is then made [532]
out of raw rice, and to this image a few grains of rice and gingelly seed are offered. When this has been done, the relatives and the neighbours who have been there depart, taking care to bathe themselves before entering their houses.

The ceremony next in importance is the *Séshakriya* (mak- 765
ing offerings to the deceased's spirit) which begins on the 782
second day after death and continues for seven days, the parti- 613
culars of which are as follows:—All the male members of the family, junior to the deceased, bathe and return home. The eldest of them who has the torn cloth and the piece of iron, together with the others, assemble in the central court-yard of the house, where there has been prepared by their *enangan* Chithayan, some boiled rice, a few gingelly seeds, a few leaves of the *cherula*, some curd, and a small measure of paddy, rice, and turmeric. All these are placed in the north-east corner with a lamp locally made. A piece of palmyra leaf, about a foot or so in length and the width of a finger is taken, one end after being knotted, is placed in the ground, and the long end is left sticking up. This leaf represents the deceased, and the rice and other things are offered to it. The following is the 824
belief concerning the use of the palmyra leaf:—There are in 826
the human body ten humours, *Váyus, Pránan, Apánan, Sa-* 764
mánan, Udánan, Vyánan, Nágan, Kúrman, Krikalan, Déva- 774
dathan and *Dhananjayan*. There are *Desavayus* or ten airs. When cremation was performed for the first time, all excepting the last were consumed in the fire, while the last flew up and settled on a palmyra leaf. This was discovered by some Brah- [789]
man sages, who by means of *mantrams* forced it into the [775]
palmyra leaf. So it is thought that by making offerings to this leaf for seven days, the spirit of the deceased will be pacified. 782

The place where the leaf is to be fixed is first cleaned care- 824
fully, and the leaf is then placed in the centre of the prepared 765
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824 765 782 613 surface. The men, when they return from their baths, bring with them some harialli grass (*karukapullu*); and making an obeisance with the right knee on the ground, they spread some grass near the strip of palmyra leaf, and rings made of the leaf are also worn by all those present. The eldest of the *anandaravans* or nephew then makes offerings of water, turmeric and leaves of the *cherula*, as well as balls of boiled rice with a few gingelly grains and curds poured over it. As boys are forbidden to make the offerings, should the nephew chance to be a boy, it is considered sufficient for him to touch one of the elders who, under those circumstances, makes the offerings. The whole is then covered with a plantain leaf, a lighted wick is waved near it, and some milk is poured under the leaf. This is left undisturbed for some seconds, after which the leaf is tapped gently with the back of the fingers of the right hand; it is then removed and torn in two at its mid-rib, one piece being placed on either side of the *pindams*. And now the ceremony is over for the day. The agnates rise and remove their wet clothing, sometimes even bathe again. The torn cloth is tied round a pillar near the basket covering the leaf, and the leaf is uncovered every day for seven days at the same hour for the performance of the ceremony. At the end of each day's ceremony the offerings of rice balls left are unguarded for a short time to allow the crows to feed on them ; after which they are removed by the female members of the *tarawád*, who are junior to the deceased, and the eldest of them carries the offerings to the side of a tank
[825] and throws them into the water. It is believed that if the
[775] crows take them, the spirit is pleased. Should the crows leave
[231] any remains, they must be thrown into the water, as dogs must not eat the offerings.

765 783 613 574 During the seven days the house of the deceased and all its inmates are considered to be under pollution, and the members of that *tarawád* may not go to any other house nor can members of other *tarawáds* visit them without polluting themselves ; but this pollution can be removed by bathing. During this period, however, as a rule, the *káranavan* of the family receives visits of condolence from relatives and friends to whom he is at home on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Here it must be said, that in some cases, the visitors bring with them small presents in money or in kind to help the *káranavan* with the expenditure to which the funeral rites put him.

On the third day after the death, all those who are related to 765
the *tarawád* by matrimonial alliances combine and give a feast 613
to the inmates of the house and to the neighbours. This is
called the *Patni kanji.* On the seventh day a return feast is
given by the members of the *tarawád*, to all relations and
neighbours. Between the seventh and the fourteenth day after
death, no ceremonies are performed, but the members of the
family are under pollution, and then on the fourteenth day comes
the *Sanchayanam*. It is the disposal of the calcined remains.
the ashes of the deceased. The male members of the *tarawad*
go to the place of cremation, and picking up the unburnt bones
of the deceased, place them in an earthern pot which is sun-
dried—not burnt in the usual way—and cover up the mouth of
the pot with a piece of cloth. The eldest carries it and, followed
by the rest, proceeds to the nearest river (it must be a running
stream) into which it is thrown. In some places the bones [778]
are collected on the seventh and preserved in a pot which,
when convenient, is carried to Benares, Rameswaram, Gaya, or
to Thirunelly in Wynad and there deposited as above described.
Such a disposal is called *Ashtagaya-Sradham*, and puts an end
to the need of all earthly ceremonies—nor is there any need to
continue the annual ceremony for that person. The belief is [775]
that the collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead
gives peace to the departed spirit, which will not thereafter
injure the living members of the *tarawád*.

On the fifteenth day is the purificatory ceremony at which 765
a man of the *Attikurissi* clan officiates as priest. In the morn- 783
ing the members of the family wear cloths washed by a *Vélan* 613
(washerman) and assemble together for purification by the Na- 793
yar priest who throws on them, both before and after bathing,
paddy, rice, gingelly seeds, and the holy mixture (milk, oil, etc.).
The Elayad or the Brahman priest performs the *Punyáham* or
purification of the house, well, etc., and on the sixteenth day he
takes the place of the priest. On the evening of the fifteenth day [431]
and the morning of the sixteenth, the priests and the villagers are
sumptuously fed, and presents of cloth are made to the latter
and money to the former. In the Chittur Taluk, the priestly [604]
functions are sometimes performed by the Elayad, and *Deeksha* [593]
(leaving the body unshaved for forty-one days or a year) is ob-
served by the nephew and the son of the deceased. The one 765
who is under this mark of mourning makes offerings of rice balls 613
[782]

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613 and gingelly seeds every morning after his bath to the departed
[782] spirit, and he must abstain from women, meat, alcoholic drinks,
and from chewing betel and tobacco. When the *Deeksha* is
observed, the ashes of the dead are not deposited as described
above until the last day of *Deeksha*, the forty-first or the 365th
day after death. When *Deeksha* is observed for a year, the
ceremony called *bali* is performed every day. The last day of
Deeksha is one of festivity, and after *bali*, the man under *Deeksha*
769 is shaved. Then at the end of every year, the annual *Sradha*
[782] or the commemorative rite is performed for the deceased.
Rice ball offerings are made and given to the crows, when
[825] clapping of hands announces to these birds that the rice is
being thrown for them, and should they come and eat it, it is
considered that the spirit of the deceased is pleased with the
[613] offering and is not likely to be troublesome. But, on the other
hand, should they not come and eat it, it is evident that the
spirit is displeased and the *tarawád* had better be on the look
766 out. In the case of those who have committed suicide or met
death by violent means, the spirits are always particularly
775 vicious and troublesome to the *tarawád*, invariably rendering
613 miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless the spirits
782 are pacified, they will ruin the family, so a Brahman priest is
invited to satisfy them by means of *Tilahómam*, a rite in
which sacrificial fire is raised, and ghee and gingelly seeds
are among the offerings.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909

AW11 Kerala AW11

Nayar

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184 Manavālan arrives in rich attire. He is often preceded by a sort of body guard with sword and shield who utter a curious kind of cry, and is met at the gate of the girl's house by a bevy of matrons with lamps and salvers decorated with flowers and lights, called talams. A man of the girl's family washes his feet, and he takes his seat in the pandal on the girl's right. Sometimes the girl's father at this stage presents new cloths (mantravādi or mantrokōdi) to the pair, who at once don them. The girl's father takes the tāli, a small round plate of gold about the size of a two-anna bit, with a hole at the top, from the goldsmith who is in waiting, pays him for it, [787] and gives it to the Manavālan. The karnavan or father of the girl asks the astrologer thrice if the moment has arrived, and, as he signifies his assent the third time, the Manavālan ties the tāli round the girl's neck amidst the shouts of those present. The Manavālan carries the girl indoors to the macchu, and feasting brings the day to [533] a close. Tom-toming and other music are of course incessant accompaniments throughout as on other festal occasions, and the women in attendance keep up a curious kind of whistling, called kurava, beating their lips with their fingers. On the fourth day, girl and Manavālan go in procession to the temple richly dressed. The boy, carrying some sort of sword and shield, heads ● [782] the party. If the family be one of position, he and the girl must be mounted on an elephant. Offerings are made to the deity, and presents to the Brāhmans. They then return home, and, as they enter the house, the Manavālan who brings up the rear is pelted by the boys of the party with plantains, which he wards off with his shield. In other cases, he is expected to make a pretence of forcing the door open. These two usages are no doubt to be classed with those marriage ceremonies which take the

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184 of pān-supāri. Every time that a marriage ceremony is
[574] celebrated, a member of the family visits His Highness
the Rāja with presents, and solicits his permission for
the celebration. Such presents are often made to the
Nambūdri Jenmis (landlords), by their tenants, and by
[424] castes attached to illams. It may be noted that certain
[643] privileges, such as sitting on a grass mat, having an
elephant procession, drumming, firing of pop-guns, etc.,
have often to be obtained from the Ruler of the State.
The marriage itself begins with the procession to the
marriage pandal with the eight auspicious things
(ashtamangalyam) and pattiniruththal (seating for song),
at the latter of which a Brāhmini or Pushpini sings certain
songs based upon suitable Purānic texts. The girls and
other female members of the family, dressed in gay attire
and decked with costly ornaments, come out in procession
to the pandal, where the Pushpini sings, with
tom-toms and the firing of pop-guns at intervals. After
three, five, or seven rounds of this, a cutting of the
jasmine placed in a brass pot is carried on an elephant
by the Elayad or family priest to the nearest Bhagavati
temple, where it is planted on the night previous to the
ceremonial day with tom-toms, fireworks, and joyous
shouts of men and women. A few hours before the
auspicious moment for the ceremony, this cutting is
[782] brought back. Before the tāli is tied, the girls are
brought out of the room, and, either from the ground
itself or from a raised platform, beautifully decorated
with festoons, etc., are made to worship the sun. The
bridegroom, a Tirumulpād or an enangan, is then
brought into the house with sword in hand, with tom-toms,
firing of pop-guns, and shouts of joy. At the gate
he is received by a few female members with ashtamangalyam
in their hands, and seated on a bench or

Malabar. "The first regular ceremony performed 843
during pregnancy is known as pulikudi or drinking
tamarind, which corresponds to the Pumsavanam of
the Brāhmans. But there are other observances of
less importance, which commonly, if not invariably,
precede this, and may be considered as corresponding
to the Garbharakshana (embryo or womb protection)
ceremony sometimes performed by Brāhmans, though
not one of the obligatory sacraments. Sometimes the [778]
pregnant woman is made to consume daily a little
ghee (clarified butter), which has been consecrated by
a Nambūdiri with appropriate mantrams. Sometimes [793]
exorcists of the lower castes, such as Pānans, are [789]
called in, and perform a ceremony called Balikkala, in
which they draw magic patterns on the ground, into [534]
which the girl throws lighted wicks, and sing rude songs
to avert from the unborn babe the unwelcome attentions
of evil spirits, accompanying them on a small drum
called tudi, or with bell-metal cymbals. The ceremony [782]
concludes with the sacrifice of a cock, if the woman is
badly affected by the singing. The pulikudi is variously
performed in the fifth, seventh, or ninth month. An [787]
auspicious hour has to be selected by the village
astrologer for this as for most ceremonies. A branch [824]
of a tamarind tree should be plucked by the pregnant [415]
woman's brother, who should go to the tree with a kindi
(bell-metal vessel) of water, followed by an Enangatti* [354]
carrying a hanging lamp with five wicks (tukkuvilakku),
and, before plucking it, perform three pradakshinams
round it. In the room in which the ceremony is to be

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* An Enangan or Inangan is a man of the same caste and sub-division or marriage group. It is usually translated "kinsman," but is at once wider and narrower in its connotation. My Enangans are all who can marry the same people that I can. An Enangatti is a female member of an Enangan's family.

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on her head, and lets it trickle down two or three hairs 843
to her navel, where it is caught in a plate. Then the 564
girl and her brother, holding hands, dig a hole with
the charakkōl and pisankatti, and plant the tamarind
branch in the nadumittam, and water it. Then the [782]
juice is administered. Until she is confined, the girl [824]
waters the tamarind branch, and offers rice, flowers,
and lighted wicks to it three times a day. When labour
begins, she uproots the branch."

"At delivery," Mr. Balakrishnan Nāyar writes, 844
"women of the barber caste officiate as midwives. In 564
some localities, this is performed by Vēlan caste women. 783
Pollution is observed for fifteen days, and every day the 846
mother wears cloths washed and presented by a woman [564]
of the Vannān [or Tīyan] caste. On the fifteenth day is
the purificatory ceremony. As in the case of death pol- [764]
lution, a man of the Attikurissi clan sprinkles on the [825]
woman a liquid mixture of oil and the five products of [824]
the cow (pānchagavya), with gingelly (*Sesamum*) seeds.
Then the woman takes a plunge-bath, and sits on the
ground near the tank or river. Some woman of the
family, with a copper vessel in her hands, takes water
from the tank or river, and pours it on the mother's
head as many as twenty-one times. This done, she
again plunges in the water, from which she emerges
thoroughly purified. It may be noted that, before the
mother proceeds to purify herself, the new-born babe has
also to undergo a rite of purification. It is placed on
the bare floor, and its father or uncle sprinkles a few
drops of cold water on it, and takes it in his hands. The [828]
superstitious believe that the temperament of the child
is determined by that of the person who thus sprinkles
the water. All the members of the taravād observe [613]
pollution for fifteen days following the delivery, during

Then the Karanavan, or the father, ceremoniously 852
approaches, and sits down facing the child. First he 853
puts in the mouth of the child a mixture of the tamarind, [613]
chillies and salt, then some rice, and lastly a little sugar.
Thenceforward the ordinary food of the child is rice.
It is usual on this occasion for relatives (and especially
the bandhus, such as the ammayi, or 'uncle's wife')
to adorn the child with gold bangles, rings and other
ornaments. The rice-giving ceremony is, in some cases,
preferably performed at some famous temple, that at
Guruvayūr being a favourite one for this purpose." It [782]
is noted by Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar that the rice- [553]
giving ceremony is usually performed by taking the
child to a neighbouring temple, and feeding it with the
meal offered to the deity as nivadiyam. In some places,
the child is named on the chorūn day.

Of ceremonies which take place in infancy and child- 852
hood, the following account is given in the Gazetteer of 846
Malabar. "On the fifth day after birth, a woman of the 564
Attikurissi or Mārayan caste among Nāyars, or of the
barber caste in the lower classes, is called in, and purifies
the mother, the other women of the household, and the
room in which the child was born, by lustration with milk
and gingelly oil, using karuga (*Cynodon Dactylon*) as a
sprinkler. Her perquisites are the usual niracchaveppu
(1 edangazhi of paddy and 1 nazhi of uncooked rice)
placed together with a lamp of five wicks in the room
to be cleansed, and a small sum in cash. A similar
purification ceremony on the 15th day concludes the
pollution period. In some cases, milk and cow's urine [386]
are sprinkled over the woman, and, after she has bathed, [824]
the Mārayan or Attikurissi waves over her and the
child two vessels, one containing water stained red
with turmeric and lime, and one water blackened with
powdered charcoal.

are set forth with a plate, if possible of silver, containing 852
milk, honey, and bits of a sort of plantain called kunnan,
together with three jack leaves folded to serve as spoons.
The mother brings the child newly bathed, and places it 852
in his Karnavan's lap. The goldsmith is in attendance 613
with a string of five beads (mani or kuzhal) made of the [326]
panchaloham or five metals, gold, silver, iron, copper [823]
and lead, which the father ties round the baby's waist.
The Karnavan, or the mother, then administers a spoonful
of the contents of the plate to the child with each of
the jack leaves in turn. The father's sister, or other [853]
female relative, also administers some, and the Karnavan
then whispers the child's name thrice in its right ear.

"The name is not publicly announced till the Chōrunnu 553
or Annaprāsanam (rice giving), which takes place [787]
generally in the sixth month, and must be performed at
an auspicious moment prescribed by an astrologer. The
paraphernalia required are, besides the five-wicked lamp,
some plantain leaves on which are served rice and four
kinds of curry called kalan, olan, avil, and ericchakari,
some pappadams (wafers of flour and other ingredients),
plantains and sweetmeats called uppēri (plantains fried
in cocoanut oil). The mother brings the child newly 553
bathed, and wearing a cloth for the first time, and places 613
it in the Karnavan's lap. The father then ties round the
child's neck a gold ring, known as muhurta mothiram
(auspicious moment ring), and the relatives present give
the child other ornaments of gold or silver according to
their means, usually a nūl or neck-thread adorned with
one or more pendants, an arannal or girdle, a pair of
bangles, and a pair of anklets. The Karnavan then, [782]
after an oblation to Ganapathi, gives the child some
of the curry, and whispers its name in its right ear three
times. He then carries the child to a cocoanut tree

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613 near the house, round which he makes three pradakshinams, pouring water from a kindi round the foot of the tree as he does so. The procession then returns to the house, and on the way an old woman of the family proclaims the baby's name aloud for the first time in the form of a question, asking it 'Krishnan' (for instance), 'dost thou see the sky?' In some cases, the father simply calls out the name twice.

852 "The Vidyarambham ceremony to celebrate the 871 beginning of the child's education takes place in the fifth [778] or seventh year. In some places, the child is first taken to the temple, where some water sanctified by mantrams is poured over his head by the Shāntikāran (officiating priest). The ceremony at the house is opened by Ganapathi pūja performed by an Ezhuttacchan, or by a [782] Nambūdri, or another Nāyar. The Ezhuttacchan writes on the child's tongue with a gold fanam (coin) the invocation to Ganapathi (Hari Sri Ganapathayi nama), or sometimes the fifty-one letters of the Malayalam alphabet, and then grasps the middle finger of the child's right hand, and with it traces the same letters in parched rice. He also gives the child an ola (strip of palm leaf) inscribed with them, and receives in return a small fee [875] in cash. Next the child thrice touches first the Ezhuttacchan's feet, and then his own forehead with his [576] right hand, in token of that reverent submission to the teacher, which seems to have been the key-note of the old Hindu system of education.

304. "The Kāthukuttu or ear-boring is performed either at the same time as the Pāla-kudi or the Choulam, or at any time in the fifth or seventh year. The operator, who may be any one possessing the necessary skill, pierces first the right and then the left ear with two gold or silver wires brought by the goldsmith, or with karamullu

764 persons who have died of cholera or small-pox. When
766 preparations for the funeral have been made, the corpse
351 is removed to the natumuttam or central yard of the house, if there is one (there always is in the larger houses); and, if there is not, is taken to the front yard, where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is washed and anointed, the usual marks are made with sandal paste
764 and ashes as in life, and it is neatly clothed. There is
613 then done what is called the potavekkuka ceremony, or placing new cotton cloths (kōti mundu) over the corpse by the senior member of the deceased's taravād followed by all the other members, and also the sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, and all relatives. These cloths are used for tying up the corpse, when being taken to
184 the place of burial or cremation. In some parts of Malabar, the corpse is carried on a bier made of fresh bamboos, tied up in these cloths, while in others it is carried, well covered in the cloths, by hand. In either case it is carried by the relatives. Before the corpse is removed, there is done another ceremony called pāra-
804 virakkuka, or filling up pāras. (A pāra is a measure
764 nearly as big as a gallon.) All adult male members of the taravād take part in it under the direction of a man of the Attikkurissi clan who occupies the position of director of the ceremonies during the next fifteen days, receiving as his perquisites all the rice and other offerings made to the deceased's spirit. It consists in filling up three pāra measures with paddy (unhusked rice), and one edangāli ($\frac{1}{10}$ of a pāra) with raw
782 rice. These offerings of paddy and rice are placed very near the corpse, together with a burning lamp of the kind commonly used in Malabar, called nela vilaku. If the taravād is rich enough to afford one, a silk cloth is placed over the corpse before its removal for cremation.

As much fuel as is necessary having been got ready at 764
the place of cremation, a small pit about the size of 613
the corpse is dug, and across this are placed three long
stumps of plantain tree, one at each end, and one in the
middle, on which as a foundation the pyre is laid. The [824]
whole, or at least a part of the wood used, should be
that of the mango tree. As the corpse is being removed
to the pyre, the senior Anandravan [*] who is next in age
(junior) to the deceased tears from one of the new cloths
laid on the corpse a piece sufficient to go round his
waist, ties it round his waist and holds in his hand, or
tucks into his cloth at the waist, a piece of iron, generally
a long key. This individual is throughout chief among [782] ●
the offerers of pindam (balls of rice) to the deceased. The [823]
corpse is laid on the bier with the head to the south,
with the fuel laid over it, and a little camphor, sandalwood
and ghī (clarified butter); if these things are
within the means of the taravād. Here must be stated [561]
the invariable rule that no member of the taravād, male
or female, who is older than the deceased, shall take any
part whatever in the ceremony, or in any subsequent
ceremony following on the cremation or burial. All
adult males junior to the deceased should be present
when the pyre is lighted. The deceased's younger
brother, or, if there is none surviving, his nephew (his
sister's eldest son) sets fire to the pyre at the head of the
corpse. If the deceased left a son, this son sets fire at
the same time to the pyre at the feet of the corpse. In
the case of the deceased being a woman, her son sets fire
to the pyre ; failing a son, the next junior in age to her
has the right to do it. It is a matter of greatest

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[*] The eldest male member of the taravād is called the Karanavan. All male members, brothers, nephews, and so on, who are junior to him, are called Anandravans of the taravād.

764 importance that the whole pyre burns at once. The
613 greatest care is taken that it burns as a whole, consuming
every part of the corpse. While the corpse is being
consumed, all the members of the deceased's taravād who
carried it to the pyre go and bathe in a tank (there is
always one in the compound or grounds round every
Nâyar's house). The eldest, he who bears the piece of
torn cloth and iron (the key), carries an earthen pot of
water, and all return together to the place of cremation.
[763] It should be said that, on the news of a death, the
neighbours assemble, assisting in digging the grave,
preparing the pyre, and so on, and, while the members
of the taravād go and bathe, they remain near the
corpse. By the time the relatives return it is almost
consumed by the fire, and the senior Anandravan carries
the pot of water thrice round the pyre, letting the water
leak out by making holes in the pot as he walks round.
On completing the third round, he dashes the pot on
the ground close by where the head of the dead body has
been placed. A small image representing the deceased
is then made out of raw rice, and to this image a few
grains of rice and gingelly seeds are offered. When this
has been done, the relatives go home and the neighbours
depart, bathing before entering their houses. When the
764 cremation has been done by night, the duty of sēshakriya
782 (making offerings to the deceased's spirit) must be begun
775 the next day between 10 and 11 A.M., and is done on
613 seven consecutive days. In any case the time for this
ceremony is after 10 and before 11, and it continues for
seven days. It is performed as follows. All male
members of the taravād younger than the deceased go
together to a tank and bathe, *i.e.*, they souse themselves
in the water, and return to the house. The eldest of
them, the man who tore off the strip of cloth from

the corpse, has with him the same strip of cloth and 764
the piece of iron, and all assemble in the central 613
courtyard of the house, where there have been placed 782
ready by an enangan some rice which has been half 775
boiled, a few grains of gingelly, a few leaves of the cherūla
(*Ærua lanata*), some curds, a smaller measure of paddy,
and a smaller measure of raw rice. These are placed in
the north-east corner with a lamp of the ordinary Malabar
pattern. A piece of palmyra leaf, about a foot or so in
length and the width of a finger, is taken, and one end of
it is knotted. The knotted end is placed in the ground,
and the long end is left sticking up. This represents
the deceased. The rice and other things are offered to
it. The belief concerning this piece of palmyra leaf is
explained thus. There are in the human body ten [826]
humours:—Vāyūs, Prānan, Apānan, Samānan, Udānan, [774]
Vyānan, Nāgan, Kurman, Krikalan, Dēvadattan, Dhananjayan. These are called Dasavāyu, *i.e.*, ten airs. When cremation was done for the first time, all these, excepting the last, were destroyed by the fire. The last one flew up, and settled on a palmyra leaf. Its existence was discovered by some Brāhman sages, who, by means of mantrams, forced it down to a piece of palmyra leaf on the earth. So it is thought that, by making offerings to this Dhananjayan leaf for seven days, the spirit of the deceased will be mollified, should he have any anger to vent on the living members of the taravād. The place where the piece of leaf is to be fixed has been carefully cleaned, and the leaf is fixed in the centre of the prepared surface. The offerings made to it go direct to the spirit of the deceased, and the peace of the taravād is assured. The men who have bathed and returned have brought with them some grass (karuka pulla), plucked on their way back to the house.

764 613 722 775

They kneel in front of the piece of palmyra, with the right knee on the ground. Some of the grass is spread on the ground near the piece of leaf, and rings made with it are placed on the ring finger of the right hand by each one present. The first offerings consist of water, sandal paste, and leaves of the cherūla, the eldest of the Anandravans leading the way. Boys need not go through the actual performance of offerings; it suffices for them to touch the eldest as he is making the offerings. The half boiled rice is made into balls (pindam), and each one present takes one of these in his right hand, and places it on the grass near the piece of palmyra leaf. Some gingelly seeds are put into the curd, which is poured so as to make three rings round the pindams. It is poured out of a small cup made with the leaf on which the half-boiled rice had been placed. It should not be poured from any other kind of vessel. The whole is then covered with this same plantain leaf, a lighted wick is waved, and some milk is put under the leaf. It is undisturbed for some moments, and leaf is gently tapped with the back of the fingers of the right hand. The leaf is then removed, and torn in two at its midrib, one piece being placed on either side of the pindams. The ceremony is then over for the day. The performers rise, and remove the wet clothing they have been wearing. The eldest of the Anandravans should, it was omitted to mention, be kept somewhat separated from the other Anandravans while in the courtyard, and before the corpse is removed for cremation; a son-in-law or daughter-in-law, or some such kind of relation remaining, as it were, between him and them. He has had the piece of cloth torn from the covering of the corpse tied round his waist, and the piece of iron in the folds of his cloth, or stuck in his waist during the ceremony

which has just been described. Now, when it has been 764
completed, he ties the piece of cloth to the pillar of the 613
house nearest to the piece of palmyra leaf which has 782
been stuck in the ground, and puts the piece of iron in a 775
safe place. The piece of palmyra leaf is covered with
a basket. It is uncovered every day for seven days at
the same hour, while the same ceremony is repeated.
The balls of rice are removed by women and girls of the
taravād who are junior to the deceased. They place
them in the bell-metal vessel in which the rice was
boiled. The senior places the vessel on her head, and
leads the way to a tank, on the bank of which the rice
is thrown. It is hoped that crows will come and eat [825]
it; for, if they do, the impression is received that the
deceased's spirit is pleased with the offering. But, if
somehow it is thought that the crows will not come and
eat it, the rice is thrown into the tank. Dogs are not to
be allowed to eat it. The women bathe after the rice
has been thrown away. When the ceremony which has
been described has been performed for the seventh time,
i.e., on the seventh day after death, the piece of palmyra
leaf is removed from the ground, and thrown on the
ashes of the deceased at the place of cremation. During 765
these seven days, no member of the taravād goes to any 613
other house. The house of the dead, and all its inmates 783
are under pollution. No outsider enters it but under 574
ban of pollution, which is, however, removable by bathing.
A visitor entering the house of the dead during
these seven days must bathe before he can enter his own
house. During these seven days, the Karanavan of the
family receives visits of condolence from relatives and
friends to whom he is "at home" on Monday, Wednesday
or Saturday. They sit and chat, chew betel, and go
home, bathing ere they enter their houses. It is said

no need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. 764
This is called ashtagaya srādh. It puts an end to the 613
need for all earthly ceremonial. It is believed that the [769]
collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead [775]
gives peace to his spirit, and, what is more important, [787]
the pacified spirit will not thereafter injure the living
members of the taravād, cause miscarriage to the women,
possess the men (as with an evil spirit), and so on. On 764
the fifteenth day after death is the purificatory ceremony. 613
Until this has been done, any one touched by any 783
member of the taravād should bathe before he enters
his house, or partakes of any food. A man of the [564]
Athikurisi clan officiates. He sprinkles milk oil, in
which some gingelly seeds have been put, over the
persons of those under pollution. This sprinkling, and
the bath which follows it, remove the death pollution.
The purifier receives a fixed remuneration for his offices [465]
on this occasion, as well as when there is a birth in the
taravād. In the case of death of a senior member of a 766
taravād, well-to-do and recognised as of some importance, 613
there is the feast called pinda atiyantaram on the 765
sixteenth day after death, given to the neighbours and 302
friends. With the observance of this feast of pindams
there is involved the dīksha, or leaving the entire body
unshaved for forty-one days, or for a year. There is no
variable limit between forty-one days or a year. The [184]
forty-one-day period is the rule in North Malabar. I
have seen many who were under the dīksha for a year.
He who lets his hair grow may be a son or nephew of
the deceased. One member only of the taravād bears 766
the mark of mourning by his growth of hair. He who 765
is under the dīksha offers half-boiled rice and gingelly 613
seeds to the spirits of the deceased every morning after [782]
his bath, and he is under restriction from women, from [784]
[834]

766
613 alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel, also from
765 tobacco. When the dīksha is observed, the ashes of the
[784] dead are not deposited as described already (in the sun-dried
[834] vessel) until its last day—the forty-first or a year
after death. When it is carried on for a year, there is
observed every month a ceremony called bali. It is
noteworthy that, in this monthly ceremony and for the
conclusion of the dīksha, it is not the thirtieth or three
hundred and sixty-fifth day which marks the date for the
ceremonies, but it is the day (of the month) of the star
which was presiding when the deceased met his death:
the returning day on which the star presides.* For the
[564] bali, a man of the Elayatu caste officiates. The Elayatus
[793] are priests for the Nāyars. They wear the Brāhmin's
thread, but they are not Brāhmins. They are not
permitted to study the Vēdas, but to the Nāyars they
[782] stand in the place of the ordinary purōhit. The officiating
Elayatu prepares the rice for the bali, when to
the deceased, represented by karuka grass, are offered
boiled rice, curds, gingelly seeds, and some other
[465] things. The Elayatu should be paid a rupee for his
services, which are considered necessary even when
the man under dīksha is himself familiar with the
[302] required ceremonial. The last day of the dīksha is one of
festivity. After the bali, the man under dīksha is shaved.
All this over, the only thing to be done for the deceased
is the annual srādh or yearly funeral commemorative rite.
[825] Rice-balls are made, and given to crows. Clapping of
[775] hands announces to these birds that the rice is being
thrown for them, and, should they not come at once and
eat, it is evident that the spirit is displeased, and the
taravād had better look out. The spirits of those who

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[805] * All caste Hindus who perform the srādh ceremonies calculate the day of death, not by the day of the month, but by the thithis (day after full or new moon).

The spirits of those who
have committed suicide, or met death by any violent 766
means, are always particularly vicious and troublesome 775
to the taravād, their spirits possessing and rendering
miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless they [782]
are pacified, they will ruin the taravād, so Brāhman
priests are called in, and appease them by means of
tilahōmam, a rite in which sacrificial fire is raised, and
ghī, gingelly, and other things are offered through it."

"There are," Mr. Fawcett writes, "many interesting 764
features in the death ceremonies as performed by the 184
Kiriattil class. Those who carry the corpse to the pyre 613
are dressed as women, their cloths being wet, and each [564]
carries a knife on his person. Two junior male members of the taravād thrust pieces of mango wood into the southern end of the burning pyre, and, when they are lighted, throw them over their shoulders to the southwards without looking round. Close to the northern end of the pyre, two small sticks are fixed in the ground, and tied together with a cloth, over which water is poured thrice. All members of the taravād prostrate to the ground before the pyre. They follow the enangu carrying the pot of water round the pyre, and go home without looking round. They pass to the northern side of the house under an arch made by two men standing east and west, holding at arms length, and touching at the points, the spade that was used to dig the pit under the pyre, and the axe with which the wood for the pyre was cut or felled. After this is done the kodali ceremony, using the spade, axe, and big knife. These are placed on the leaves where the corpse had lain. Then follows circumambulation and prostration by all, and the leaves are committed to the burning pyre."

In connection with the death ceremonies, it is noted 763
in the Cochin Census Report, 1901, that "the last 184